



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

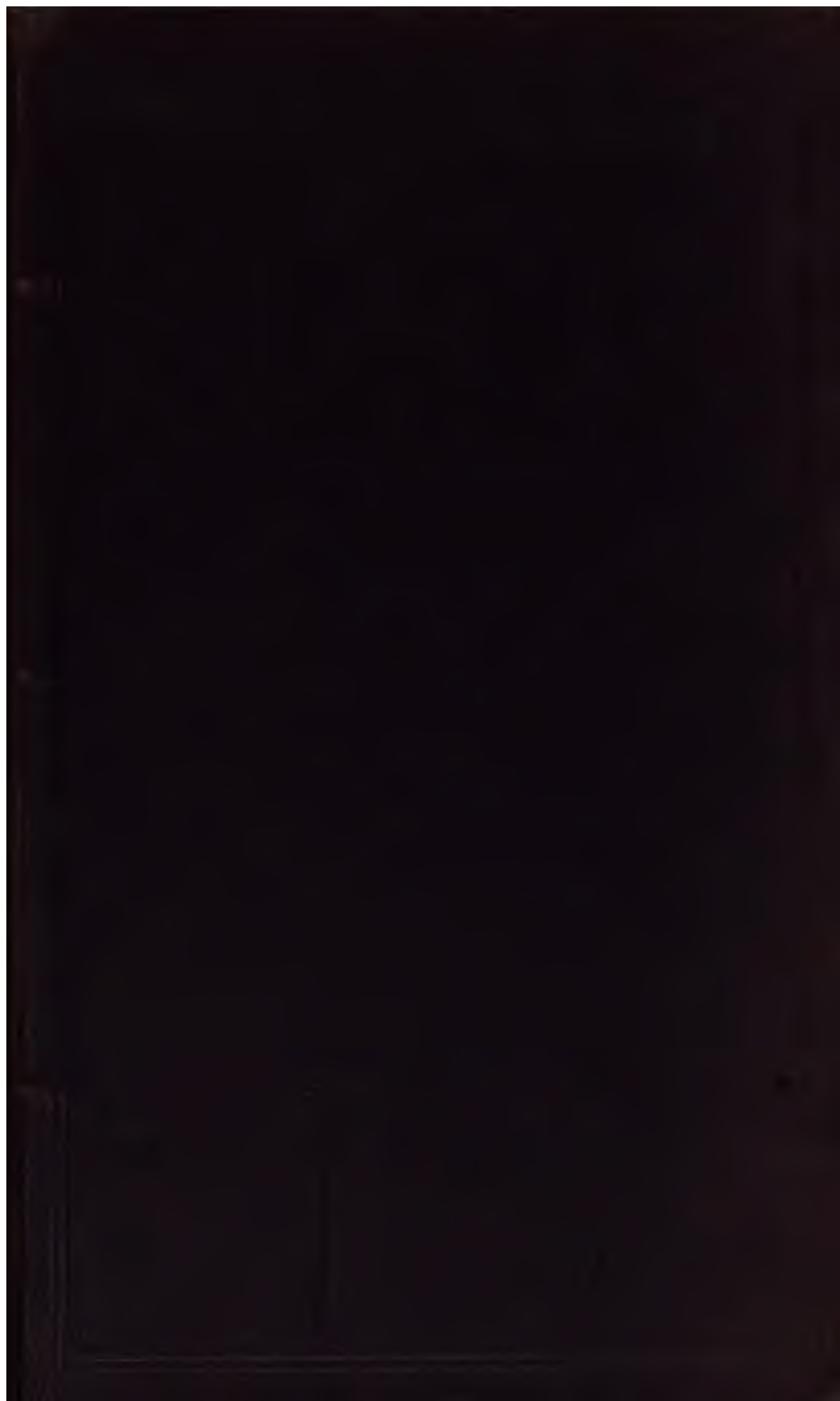
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

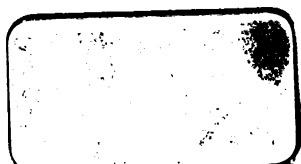
We also ask that you:

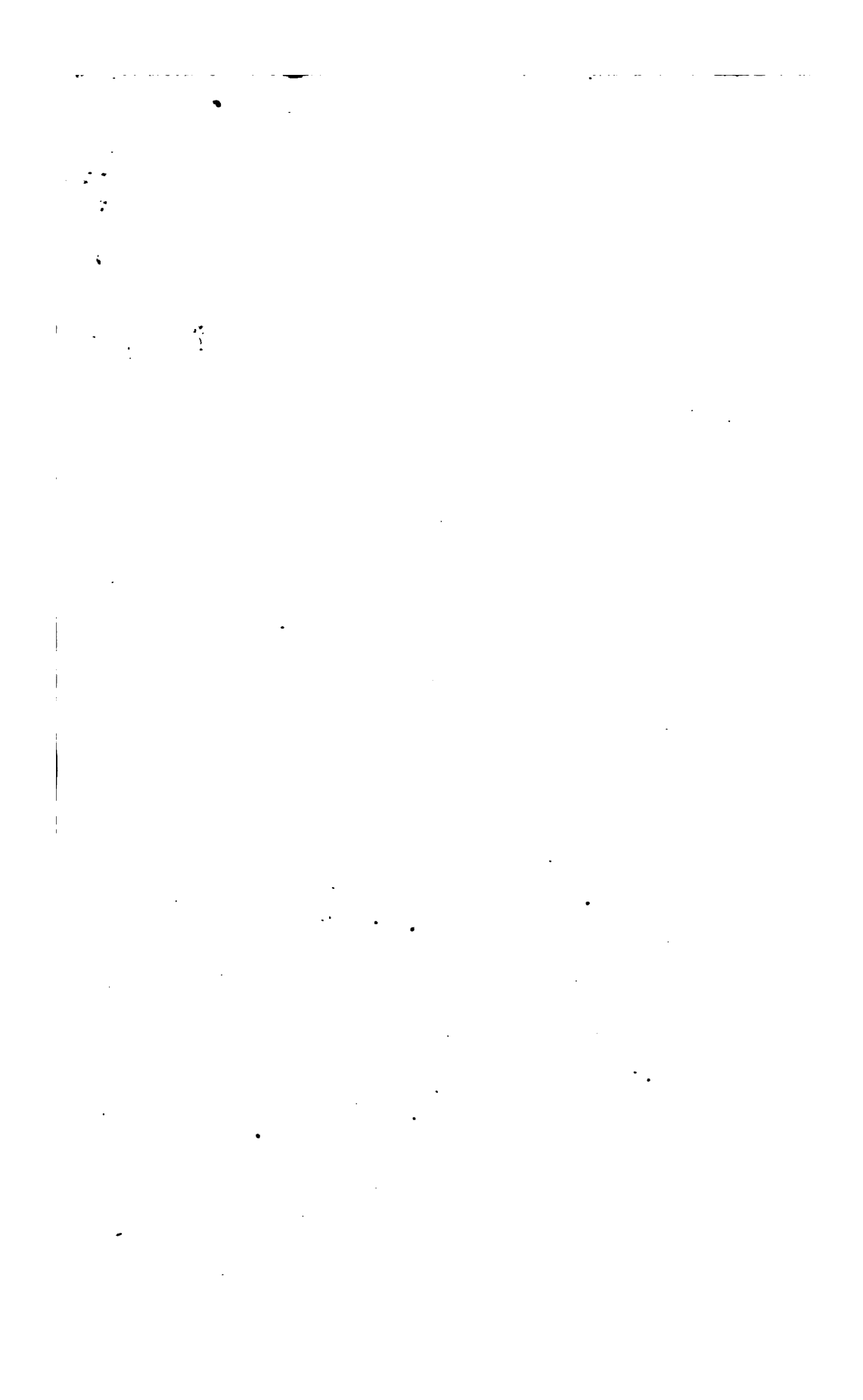
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>









THE
INQUIRIES OF RAMCHANDRA,

OR

DIALOGUES WITH A HINDU THEIST

ON

The Christian Religion,

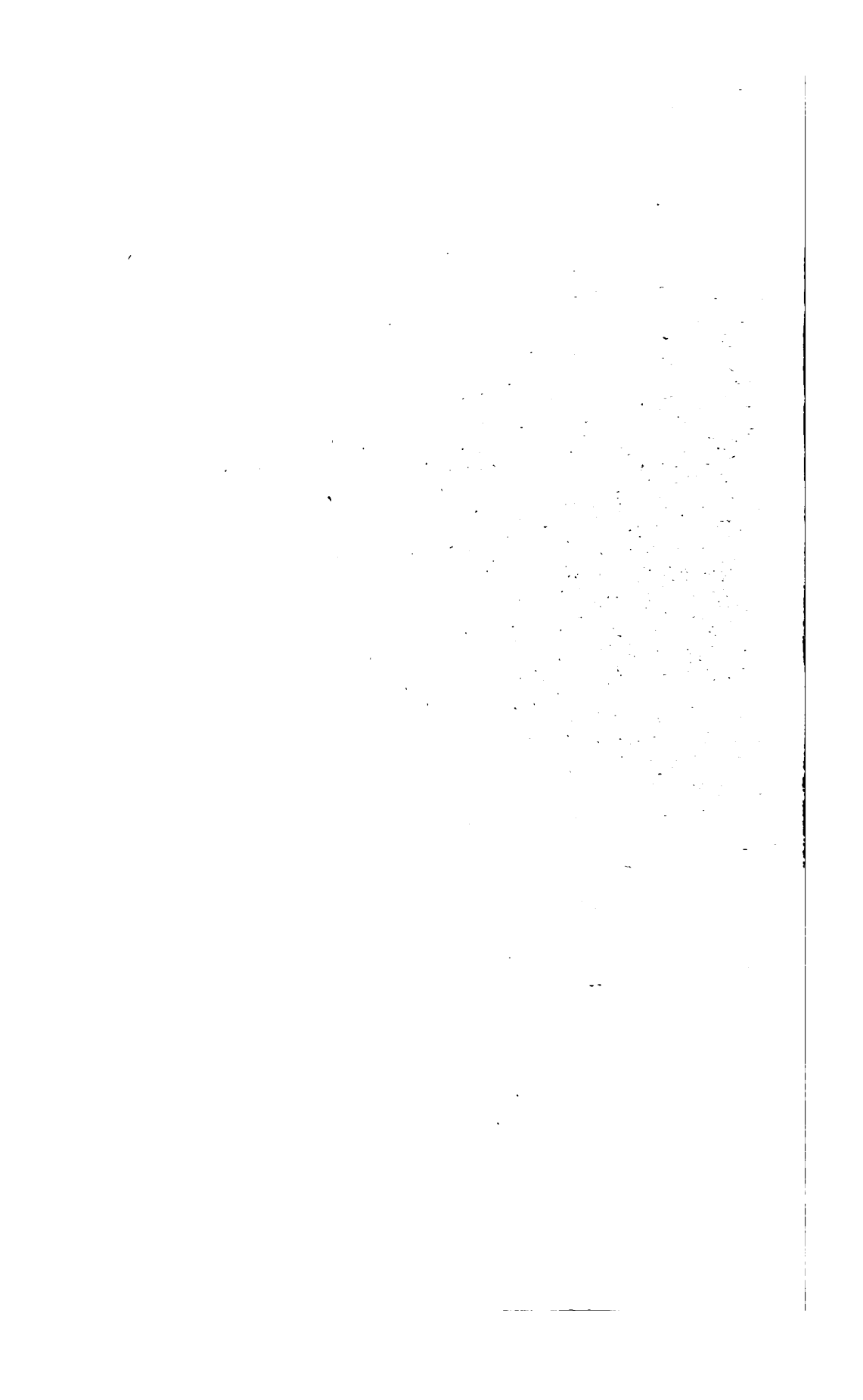
BY

AN INDIAN BISHOP.

CALCUTTA :

OXFORD MISSION PRESS.

1882.



THE
INQUIRIES OF RAMCHANDRA,

OR

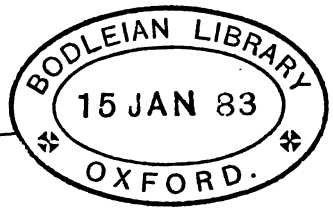
DIALOGUES WITH A HINDU THEIST

ON

The Christian Religion,

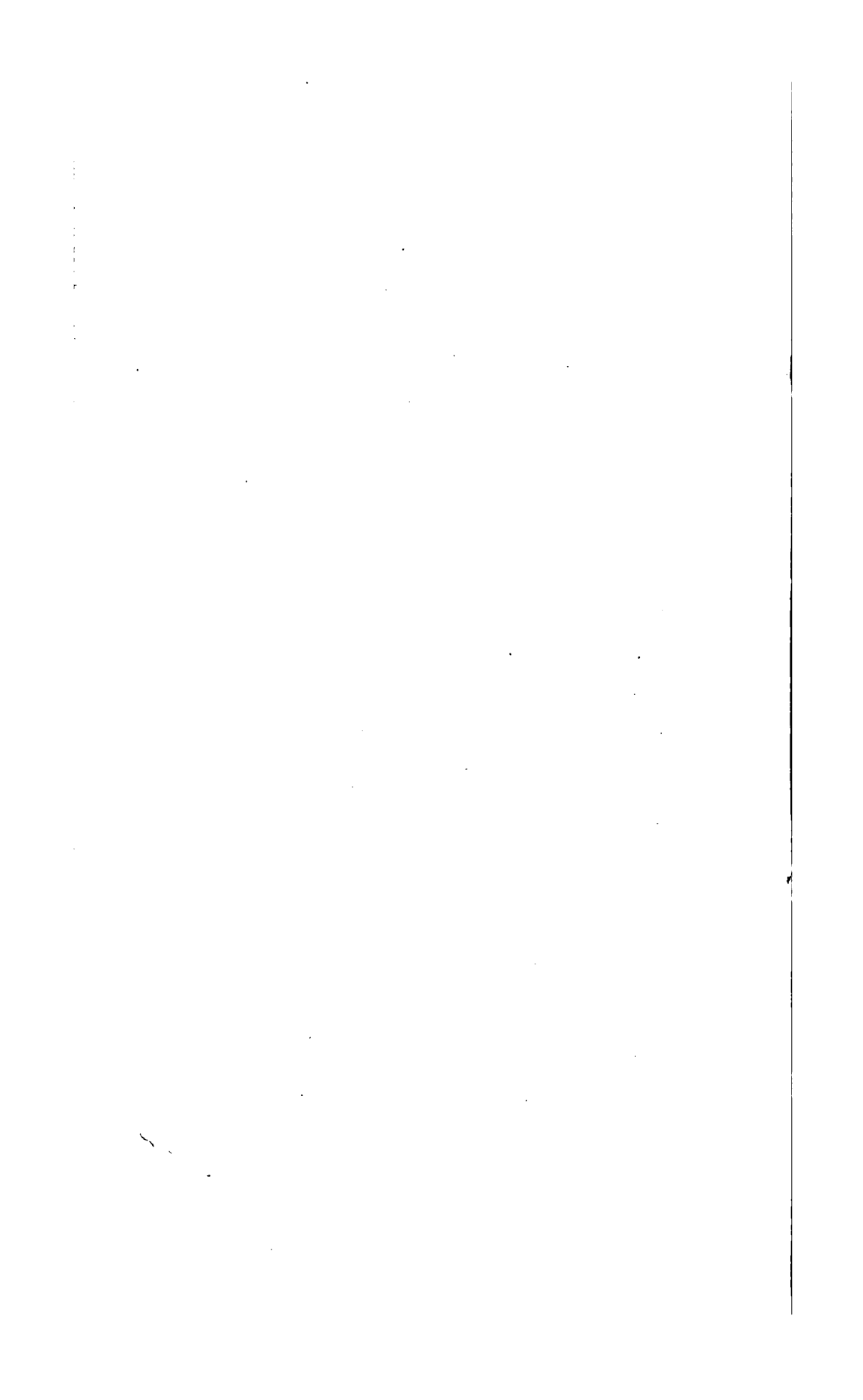
BY

AN INDIAN BISHOP.



CALCUTTA :
OXFORD MISSION PRESS.
1882.

141 i . 538.



INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH Ramchandra should be considered in the following pages as an ideal person, yet he is to be no less regarded as the embodiment of an acute and subtle minded Hindu Theist. In a similar manner, although the dialogues which he held with the Bishop of * * * are not verbally exact, they must nevertheless be equally taken as the substance of repeated interviews which were held between that Bishop and him of whom Ramchandra is here the representative.

Trained by Government Schools of Bengal, Ramchandra's worship of idols, and his belief in the 'Shastras, had long disappeared. Education in English science and literature had effectually shaken from his mind all respect for Hinduism, It has been so with a thousand others :—of whom it is not too much to say, that, while our Government has bestowed upon them a sufficient amount of moral and intellectual light to rob them of their native faith ; yet by its abnegation of direct religious instruction, it has failed to afford them the slightest opportunity of attaining any alternative opinions in divine truth. In short, we have uprooted one set of convictions without making an attempt to

supply them with others ; and, by this means, we have only passed them over from superstition into scepticism.

Under such circumstances it would perhaps be hard to say how far native society in some parts of India might not have become utterly disorganized, had not Christian Missions stepped forward to supply it with some other authoritative teaching on religion, and so given it a new turn of mind from this awakening infidelity.

Ramchandra was one of these. He had not, indeed, been brought under the influence of Christian Missions. Nevertheless amidst that ferment of thought upon religious inquiry which had been induced through the spread of Christianity, he could find no rest for his thirsting spirit. He had passed through many phases of doubt ; had attached himself to, and afterwards repudiated, various tenets of modern unbelief. These changes, however, did not result from caprice or instability. On the contrary, they had arisen from the depth of a devout sincerity which forbade him to remain satisfied with anything against which either his reason or conscience revolted. It may be right to say here, as a key to what will follow, that the central citadel of Ramchandra's convictions was a belief in the moral responsibility of man to a Personal Creator and in the freedom of the human will ; from which persuasion nothing could move him.* As for Christianity, from all

* Sir Richard Temple, in a speech delivered in England in 1880 on behalf of the "Oxford Mission," is reported to have said :—"The natives of India, when they threw off the faith of their fathers did not lapse into Atheism, nor into Materialism. No. They still believed in the immortality of the soul, and in the accountability of man to his Creator."

which he had either heard of, or read about it, instead of being attracted toward it, he was repelled. At the same time, feeling satisfied that he had never given it any fair investigation, he set himself in the first place to search the Scriptures, honestly desiring to judge them according to the light of his inner consciousness. As might have been anticipated, the result of this procedure made him more antagonistic than ever to them; and, for some time, he indulged in severe and bitter invective, when speaking to his friends on the subject.

It happened, however, one day, that a Christian fellow-countryman, who had been unable to meet Ramchandra's subtle objections, earnestly besought him as an honest inquirer after truth, not to rest content with his own conceptions of the case, nor to argue with believers whose knowledge was imperfect, but to seek out one for conference with himself, whose position and training in the Christian religion would give him an opportunity of having his objections adequately met. Accordingly Ramchandra determined upon going to the Bishop of * * *, as the highest authority which he could select.

This determination resulted in the following dialogues, which must be followed by the reader, from the Theistic stand-point of Ramchandra, without surprise at their outspoken attacks on the Christian faith. To the sensitive mind of many a believer, who has no doubt or difficulty in his religion, these attacks may possibly be painful. To the English speaking Theists of India, however, it will be otherwise. They will see from the frankness with which

such attacks have been recorded, and the fearless promptitude with which they were answered, that Christianity has no fear about its future ; and that it is ready to meet its enemies with a spirit of loving forbearance, no less than of manly and intellectual vigour.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
INTRODUCTION	i.
DIALOGUE I.	
RAMCHANDRA BEGINS BY ALLEGING THE INJUSTICE OF A DIVINE REVELATION BEING GIVEN TO ONE ELECT NATION WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD WAS LEFT IN DARKNESS.	1
DIALOGUE II.	
RAMCHANDRA RAISES THE OBJECTION THAT CHRISTIANITY CON- DEMNS ALL THE HEATHEN WHO LIVE AND DIE WITHOUT DIVINE REVELATION,	13
DIALOGUE III.	
RAMCHANDRA ENTERS UPON THE SUBJECT OF PUNISHMENT BY EVERLASTING FIRE,	21
DIALOGUE IV.	
RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES CONCERNING THE ALLEGED IMPLA- CABILITY OF GOD IN HIS MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE,	31
DIALOGUE V.	
RAMCHANDRA CHALLENGES THE BISHOP TO DEFEND THE CREDIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE MIRACLES,	40
DIALOGUE VI.	
RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES HOW A MERCIFUL GOD COULD HAVE DEMANDED THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD FOR THE PROPITIATION OF SINS,	48

DIALOGUE VII.

RAMCHANDRA NOW INQUIRES INTO THE DOCTRINE OF THE PROPITIATION FOR SIN THROUGH THE DEATH AND SUFFERINGS OF A REDEEMER,	58
--	----

DIALOGUE VIII.

RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES INTO THE MEDIATION AND MERITS OF CHRIST AS APPLIED TO THE SALVATION OF MANKIND,	75
--	----

DIALOGUE IX.

RAMCHANDRA'S DIFFICULTIES AS TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION,	80
---	----

DIALOGUE X.

RAMCHANDRA PROCEEDS TO INQUIRE INTO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD,	93
--	----

DIALOGUE XI.

RAMCHANDRA ASKS FOR SOME SHORT AND SIMPLE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY AS A DIVINE REVELATION,	105
--	-----

DIALOGUE XII.

RAMCHANDRA RESUMES HIS INQUIRY INTO THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY AS A DIVINE REVELATION,	121
--	-----

DIALOGUE XIII.

RAMCHANDRA CONFESSES HIS BELIEF IN CHRISTIANITY ; BUT IS UNABLE TO MAKE A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF IT,	141
---	-----

DIALOGUE I.

RAMCHANDRA BEGINS BY ALLEGING THE INJUSTICE OF A DIVINE REVELATION HAVING BEEN GIVEN TO ONE ELECT NATION, WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD WAS LEFT IN DARKNESS.

RAMCHANDRA. I take the liberty of asking an interview with your lordship on the subject of Christianity ; not only because you have been placed here as one of the chief rulers and teachers of your Church, but because I am anxious to be more properly informed than I am at present concerning a religion, which, though splendid in its literature and worldwide diffusion, is yet repulsive to me in many of its doctrines.

BISHOP. Pray be seated : I should deem myself singularly unfaithful to my holy calling, were I to refuse such a visitor. Conscientious inquiry within any department of human thought is commendable. How much more when it belongs to what is unchanging and eternal.

RAM. Let me return your welcome by a frank statement of my position and general opinions. I was educated at a Government School in Bengal, and graduated in the University of Calcutta ; by means of which instruction I have long since abandoned the idol worship of my fathers. When my belief in the pantheon of Hinduism, however, was destroyed, I did not, like many others, drift into secret indifference towards all forms of religious thought. On the contrary, I became an earnest seeker after truth. For awhile I wandered about within the dark labyrinths of Atheistic philosophy ; but, finding no rest in any of those speculations, I abjured them as equally irreconcilable with my reason and conscience. I then went into the more modern school of Agnosticism ; but gradually retreated from that, under a conviction that it was only

a refuge for minds which sought religious repose in a spirit of infeeblled and debilitated earnestness, Pantheistic philosophy satisfied me as little. The conception of divine power, infinite and universal in action, apart from any thinking and moral Being to direct it, was opposed to all my natural intuitions. I was led next into materialism, with its theory of thought as being merely the physical result of cerebral organization. The necessary consequence of this form of philosophy, however, being to eradicate all human responsibility, and to destroy the freedom of the human will, I escaped from it as from a system which did violence to the fundamental laws of all moral government. I then fell back upon those springs of inner self-consciousness which are always in truest harmony with the moral and intellectual powers of man; settling down at length into the belief of One Living, Eternal, and Self-existent GOD, the Creator and Preserver of all things, and the Moral Governor of the universe.

BISHOP. Do I, then, understand you to allow the full moral responsibility of man under this supreme Ruler; and, as a consequence, his free agency in the choice between moral good and evil?

RAM. I suppose no finite mind can comprehend how evil could ever have originated in the presence of an absolutely holy, and infinitely perfect and powerful God, except by postulating the essential necessity of free moral agency among all created intelligences;—that freedom being accompanied by a divine determination to permit its contingent results under some wise and just administration of mercy and of judgment. The conception of any finite being, created in such perfect purity that he could never possibly swerve from it, is allowable, so far as I can see, only under two conditions;—either, that such a being must be inherently impeccable, (in which case he would become a God rather than a creature);—or, that he must be perpetually preserved from falling by divine omnipotence, (in which case he would have no free moral agency.) Nevertheless sin, as a matter of fact, does exist, and must be accounted for. Hence, unless we believe its actual origination by God, (which is impossible) it must have been slowly evolved through past ages, by the gradual self-deterioration of

certain beings under that personal liberty which necessarily formed a part of their moral responsibility.

BISHOP. You are right. It is a truth which, to all but atheists, lies lodged intuitively within us, *viz.*, that man must have first come from the hand of his Creator without a moral flaw ; for it would be against reason to suppose that an infinitely holy GOD could have originated a moral being tainted with indwelling sin. At the same time, it is equally against reason to suppose that such a being, however perfect, could have been created impeccable. No moral agent, outside Deity itself, can be so essentially and indefeasibly holy, as to lie beyond all possibility of inadvertence in the discharge of duty. With every qualification of resisting such inadvertence, therefore, the continued rectitude of man in his first estate must have depended on the exercise of perpetual watchfulness. Indeed, within that exercise of conscientious watchfulness lay the whole essence of man's probation. When vigilance wavered, therefore, he could not but be exposed to a departure from rectitude through his own inadvertence. In the first moment of such unguarded vigilance his foothold on moral obedience slipped. However insensibly, however gradually, or rapidly, the downward progress went on ; we know the result. It has become our own transmitted inheritance. And now the great problem of the world is, how to be delivered from it, so as to stand once more in the liberty of restored righteousness.

After this, be good enough to tell me wherein the Christian religion displeases you.

RAM. I do not see how either your Old or New Testament Scriptures can contain any revelation of the mind of a truly perfect God.

BISHOP. Is it that you deny, *a priori*, the possibility of any divine revelation having been communicated to man ?

RAM. In the way that your written or book Revelation was communicated I do deny it. Yet not in another sense. For, believing in an infinitely wise and holy God, who, as supreme moral Governor of the world, will hereafter reward the righteous and condemn the wicked, I can well understand that, in view of the disorganized condition of our race, He may have manifested

special wisdom to some men for purposes of enlightenment and instruction, in different countries and in various ages, by giving them an inspiration of divine genius, and enabling them to become moral and intellectual leaders of thought among their countrymen. Periods, in which noble teachers were living like Zoroaster, Gaudama, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, and Mahomet, not forgetting that of our own Hindu Vedas, often appear to me to have been dispensations of heaven-sent truth, aiding the world towards moral regeneration. In which sense, and in which alone, can I allow any inspiration or revelation to belong to such teachers as Moses and Jesus Christ.

BISHOP. There is nothing in Christianity which forbids a similar idea. One of our own apostles says—“*Every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights.*”* All things, therefore, which have been ever written or spoken by the great teachers of mankind, in promotion of truth, love, purity, and wisdom, must have been derived from that source. Our Scriptures say again—“*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*”† Yet while the mercy of GOD may have thus been ameliorating the nations by giving them what you call dispensations of light and truth, and arresting them in their tendencies towards deepening ignorance; do you regard it as *a priori* impossible, that GOD should have bestowed, at the same time, a special and distinctive Revelation upon one chosen people, which declared some method of future salvation to the world through a coming Redeemer, and have blessed that people with covenant promises which were to be ever spreading and brightening as time went forward?

RAM. I have no wish to offend; but, speaking honestly, I hold that a Revelation of favouritism to one elect people, such as that which you have just described, must have been totally repugnant to the equity of a perfect God. Indeed the character of your God, as revealed in many parts of the Bible, appears to me to be fundamentally different from all which is written within my own natural intuitions.

* S. James. i. 17.

† S. John. iii. 27.

BISHOP. One thing is clear. As we each believe in an Eternal, Self-existent, and All-holy GOD, Who is the Creator and moral Governor of the universe; and as there cannot be two such separate Gods, (the bare conception of such a thing being self-contradictory); it follows that we must either both of us have a subjective consciousness of the same Being whom we are each apprehending under different modes of thought, (which I strongly suspect)—or one of us must be believing in a God of his own mental manufacture. Do you understand me?

RAM. Perfectly: indeed your last remark has exactly hit the point of my proposed inquiries. For, if the God who is described in your Bible be irreconcilable in character with the God in whom I have been brought to believe through my own mental and moral intuitions, it is clear that one of us must be deluded. On the other hand, if you can succeed in shewing me that we are each viewing the same God under differing modes of thought which are capable of reconciliation, you will have achieved a great conquest.

BISHOP. You fill me with a grave sense of responsibility. I can but speak, however, to the best of my ability; and trust that in doing so, I may prove helpful to you. That it may be so, tell me a little more particularly of the difficulty to which you have alluded.

RAM. It appears to me that, if God had really determined to give any full revelation of Himself to man, the rectitude of His nature would have obliged Him to make it known with an equal fairness to the whole human race. I am consequently at a loss to understand how your Bible can be true, when the revelation which He imparted left every nation but one in moral darkness, and selected that one alone for special honour. Such a course of action implied an injustice, a capriciousness, a favouritism, which is utterly repugnant to Divine goodness and justice. How do you account for it?

BISHOP. Are you aware that the very course of action which you suggest, was that which GOD did actually adopt for the space of at least two thousand five hundred years? It is true that *subsequently*, His Revelations were limited in a peculiar manner to

one elect people. With the reason of this I will deal presently ; when I trust I may be able to justify the rectitude of GOD in having adopted that course as being best adapted for the final regeneration of mankind. Meanwhile, let me prove that your sweeping allegation against the GOD of our Bible for not having done the very thing which He absolutely did, is singularly incautious and unjust.

RAM. If I have been impetuous, forgive me. I must confess that I was only regarding your Revelation as given to the people of Israel, while the rest of the world was left in darkness.

BISHOP. Yes. But the antecedent portion of the world's history, as related in our book of "Genesis," seems to have entirely escaped your notice. You date the Revelations of GOD to man only from the call of Abraham ; whereas they really commenced with the opening of human life. If you read the book of Genesis carefully, you will find our belief to be that the probation of man was conducted by GOD on general principles for more than two thousand years. Thus He is described as personally having revealed himself to Cain, the first child of an ungodly world, quite as much as to Abel who was the first child of a righteous world. With the antediluvian race also, even through its worst periods of anarchy and corruption, you will see that the Spirit of GOD is said to have constantly striven. It is written—"*My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*"* What better proof could you wish that GOD had been conducting the moral government of the world by Revelations which were perfectly general and uncircumscribed ? Again, did He not reveal Himself to Job in the land of Uz ; and to Balaam, even at a later period, in the land of Midian ? Now as neither of these men belonged to the people of Israel, I think the case is abundantly clear, that for a very long period divine teaching must have been given to the human race at large without any restriction.

RAM. Then why was a system of moral government, so evidently wise, just and good, abandoned for another which was marked by partiality and exclusiveness ?

* Gen. vi. 3.

BISHOP. It was not till the ineradicable depravity of man had proved its utter inadequacy for moral purification, that the system of divine economy to which you now take exception was resorted to. It would seem indeed, as if, by commencing with the former kind of moral government, GOD had specially designed to reveal its futility for the final regeneration of man.

RAM. That statement only introduces a fresh difficulty; for it is equivalent to saying that God failed in His purposes, and therefore could not have been Omnipotent.

BISHOP. At any rate it proves both His Equity and Omniscience; His Equity, because, upon your own shewing, it was just and proper that He should commence the moral government of a fallen world upon principles equally adapted to all men; His Omniscience, because, foreseeing how prone man would be to find fault with the opposite plan, *i.e.* the elective principle of divine intervention, GOD hereby justified that change in His government by illustrating how necessary it was for the final regeneration of the world.

RAM. You appear to me to answer one difficulty only with an unwise successfulness, which lands you directly upon another. For if it had been, as you now declare, how can you call your God Unchangeable? If He thus changed His plans, what do you make of His Immutability?

BISHOP. You seem to forget that Immutability of purpose is perfectly consistent with change of method. Do not the changes of a caterpillar into the chrysalis and the butterfly indicate successive variations which are quite consistent with one fixed and predeterminal idea of the Creator? If then such methods of development in nature be consistent with Immutability, why should you deny the same principle within GOD's moral government of the world?

RAM. I see the force of your reasoning but am not satisfied. For you must surely allow that if the first method of God's government was the most just, the necessity of a change from it to another method must have implied a limit to His Omnipotence. How is it that you worship a God, whose power was so inadequate to consummate His original design?

BISHOP. I am afraid your conception of Omnipotence is defective. You fail to distinguish between the immensity of its range, and its necessary limits. It may seem perhaps a paradox to speak of any limits to Omnipotence, nevertheless there must be such. How can Omnipotence for example contradict the immutable and essential law of its own creation? Would it not be impossible for GOD to speak falsely, when truth is an essence of His being? If, then, it be impossible for GOD, with all His Omnipotence, to violate the immutability of truth, can you not understand that there are other ways in which it would be impossible for Him to act, if by such action, the glory of His own nature were violated? Take, for instance, any irresistible coercion over the free will of man. You have already admitted the moral impossibility of this, by affirming the necessary abstention of Omnipotent interference with the exercises of intelligent responsibility. And is it not capable of demonstration? Would it be any true recovery of the world to righteousness, if the Omnipotence of GOD were to force wicked men into it against their wishes? Is not the free and willing self-surrender of a son's heart the only form of obedience which a father can receive consistently with a due sense of parental authority? Again would you consider a king really honoured by the submission of subjects to his dominion, if they were only restrained from rebelling by means of armed forces? Would obedience thus enforced yield any king true satisfaction? Could he look upon his government with self-complacency, and say, "I am enjoying full sovereignty; and my empire is filled with glory?"

RAM. I cannot deny that obedience in subjects, freely rendered to their sovereign from heartfelt loyalty and love, must always form the true ideal of a monarch's glory.

BISHOP. Is it not the same with divine sovereignty? Do you think GOD would have been truly glorified within the two thousand five hundred years of our primeval history, during which He was revealing Himself to all men without the least partiality or exclusiveness, if he had used Omnipotence in order to *compel* them to obedience? How would such a course of government have brought true glory to Himself? Or what gain would it have been

towards the ultimate regeneration of mankind? Where the springs of self-surrendering love are wanting, there can neither be pure homage nor glorified sovereignty; obedience then becomes a sham, and government merely the exercise of arbitrary power.

RAM. True as 'your observations are, they do not seem to hit the mark. For I have somewhere read in your Bible of God "*making His people willing in the day of His power.*"* How do you reconcile your remark with that statement?

BISHOP. Is it not possible for moral and intellectual influences to conquer unwilling minds without the slightest exercise of violent or irresistible coercion? When reason and conscience are appealed to by entreaty and persuasion, by warning and exhortation, sympathy and love, will not the prejudices of a mind often disperse like fog before sun-light? And will not the obstinacy of a heart melt away like Himalayan snow beneath the rains? When it is said, therefore, that the people of GOD shall be "*made willing in the day of His power,*" it does not refer to an Omnipotence which *forces* them into submission, and self-surrender; but only to those influences of moral power which I have just named, by means of which GOD triumphs in co-operation with their willing consent, and free agency. Nay, if you read our Scriptures more carefully, you will find that this is exactly the way in which GOD is described as always dealing with His Church. Listen only to a few passages. "*Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord.*"† Does that appeal to reason look like *coercion* of the mind? Again "*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"‡ Does that gentle appeal look like an irresistible exercise of Omnipotence over the affections? Or again, "*Incline your ear and hearken unto me; hear and your soul shall live.*"§ Thus the Lord reasons, invites, and persuades. He does not *force* the human will. On the contrary, when man, under the free exercise of his own responsibility, refuses all these overtures of mercy, and all these appeals to his intelligence and conscience, GOD's language towards him is of a kind which implies grief that

* Psalm. cx. 3. † Isaiah. i. 18. ‡ S. Matthew xi. 28.

§ Isaiah. lv. 3.

he has not listened; which would be an impossibility if, in so speaking, He had been using His Omnipotence. He first cries, "*My son, give me thine heart.*"* And in some cases it is written, "*They turned unto the Lord.*"† When otherwise, He exclaims, "*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.*"‡ And again, "*Oh that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!*"§ And once more, "*How often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!*"|| Thus, although the free will of man may be influenced by the power of GOD, whose Spirit can, by appeal to his conscience alike invite, warn, enlighten, comfort, and persuade, many gradations are left between constraining influences, which may be resisted, and the influences of Omnipotence which are irresistible. The moment such constraining power ceases to be an appeal to reason and conscience, and passes into the sphere of an almighty force which allows of no room for resistance, the obedience induced by it, however willing, becomes that of a mesmerised patient, rather than of a regenerated and free moral agent. In other words, the Omnipotence of GOD, in His remedial interventions on behalf of sinful man, must be necessarily limited by those conditions which are indefeasibly attached to the services of freewill intelligence.

RAM. I have been edified by your remarks, and esteem them highly; inasmuch as they do justice to your religion no less than to your philosophy. At the same time I am at a loss to reconcile them with the facts of the case before us. For their truth must surely have been as vital and powerful during the first twenty-five centuries of the world's history, when God was revealing Himself to all men alike, as when He afterwards changed His dispensation, and confined the special Revelation of Himself to one elect nation.

BISHOP. Not so. Will you allow that the problem which Omnipotence had to solve was the moral elevation and regeneration of our race from a state of ignorance and depravity, without any coercive influences over man's free agency?

* Proverbs. xxiii. 26.

† Acts. ix. 35. xi. 21. xv. 19.

‡ S. John. v. 40.

§ Deut. xxxii. 29.

|| S. Matthew. xxiii. 37.

RAM. I do so unreservedly.

BISHOP. Very well. If GOD, then, commenced this noble work on the broad and just principle of committing His Revelations to the whole human race, without limitation or exception ; if He thus placed mankind at large in a state of probation by bestowing upon all alike the promise of a Redeemer who should one day come to conquer sin and death ; and if, to sustain that hope, and preserve it from perishing, His Spirit taught mankind and strove with them against their infirmities, but was nevertheless so resisted that the hope of such Revelation well nigh became extinguished ; was it an unreasonable or unjust act, that, for the better preservation of such a glorious hope, He should, at the close of twenty-five centuries of human faithlessness, have committed His covenant Revelations to the charge of one Elect people, separated from the rest of the world, amongst whom they were to be held in trust for the future benefit of mankind generally ? And is it wonderful, that, under such altered circumstances, the moral appeals of GOD to the mind and conscience of the chosen people should have come home with a power which touched them more deeply than they had ever touched the mass of men previously ? Observe, the situation was entirely different. The choice of one Elect people to be the sacred depository of His Revelations for the future world, accompanied by promises of a peculiarly blessed nature to themselves, involved trusts, and privileges which appealed to their affections, and to their moral responsibility, greatly excelling anything which had appeared in the world before. No wonder, then, that the work of moral regeneration should have taken new root, and that willing obedience to GOD's government should have grown up in a manner which had hitherto been lacking.

RAM. I cannot deny the force of those observations.

BISHOP. The vast problem of the world's regeneration, however, was far from being solved, as indeed is still the case. But GOD is patient because He is eternal. He works slowly throughout ages, yet surely. Meanwhile remember that this elect nation held the covenant mercies of GOD in trust for the world at large ; and that, in about fifteen centuries afterwards, the same covenant mercies

of GOD, and the same gracious revelations were published, through the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, "to all nations." The choice of Israel, therefore, to be the special people of GOD was not for any other purposes than to ensure the future welfare of the entire human race. The Israelites were not selected capriciously, out of what you have called favouritism ; but with a large hearted, and world wide love, in order that, through them, Monotheism and the knowledge of other divine truths, above all, the hope and inheritance of the world's long promised Redeemer, might be at last made to bud and blossom among all nations.

RAM. I am candid enough to acknowledge that you have thrown much light over a subject on which I had before thought superficially. All further remarks, however, I will reserve till we meet again, if your lordship will grant me that indulgence.

BISHOP. Be sure of it. And may our next interview be as friendly as this has been.

DIALOGUE II.

RAMCHANDRA RAISES THE OBJECTION THAT CHRISTIANITY CONDEMNS ALL THE HEATHEN WHO LIVE AND DIE WITHOUT DIVINE REVELATION ; AND ASKS FOR AN EXPLANATION.

RAMCHANDRA. After the kind reception which your lordship gave me at our previous interview, my antipathy towards the idea of a special covenant, accompanied by exclusive revelations to one elect people, has been much softened.

BISHOP. I trust that in the end your other prejudices may similarly be modified.

RAM. You are too hopeful. For notwithstanding that our first conference has greatly relieved me of one difficulty, it has only opened out another with redoubled force.

BISHOP. Will you be good enough to tell me what it is ?

RAM. I am ready to allow that this deposit of Revelation within one elect nation, given for purposes of safety and developement, in order that mankind at large might be ultimately improved, formed no necessary impeachment of God's goodness and justice. So far well. But when starting from that point, I reflect on the condemnation of those outside nations, which were thus kept in moral and spiritual darkness ; when I think of the rest of the world, thus left sinking into ignorance of a God Who refused to enlighten it, and yet consigned it to divine wrath ; then I revolt more and more from a creed so cruel and unjust. The case appears to me to be just like that of an unreasonable father, who first shuts out the greater number of his children in the winter's cold, and then whips them for not being warm. I await your explanation.

BISHOP. I have no explanation to offer you, because I altogether deny your statement.

RAM. How so, is not the Old Testament full of condemnation of the heathen ?

BISHOP. It is full of condemnation of their idolatry, just as we should condemn it, because it is insulting to the divine glory.

RAM. But beyond that, do not your Scriptures condemn the heathen themselves ;—albeit they were abandoned without any covenant of mercy.

BISHOP. After all, I see no practical difference between the heathen outside Israel under the Old Testament dispensation, and that of the heathen outside Christendom.

RAM. Neither do I, they equally present the case of people who are condemned without the advantage of divine Revelation. Is this reasonable or just ?

BISHOP. No doubt they equally present the case of nations excluded from the mercies of a divinely revealed covenant. But in either case, would that necessarily prevent their reception of mercy from GOD independently of such a covenant.

RAM. You astonish me ! Where do your Scriptures speak of any uncovenanted mercies to the heathen ? Therein is my difficulty. Your God makes a special and most gracious covenant to one set of people,—whether Jewish as of old, or Christian as now—and He then tells all other people lying beyond its reach, that they must be damned because they are outside it.

BISHOP. Excuse me, you are under a delusion. That is the accusation of an enemy ; not the statement of a sincere inquirer.

RAM. Forgive me if my words have pained you, I thought they expressed the general belief of the Christian Church.

BISHOP. You are wrong ; it was once a vulgar and traditional opinion, I admit, but nothing more ; and it has always been most mischievous. Did you never hear of the old Frisian chief who refused to be baptized in consequence of an expression of this vulgar opinion on the part of an indiscreet Bishop ? The old pagan had already immersed one of his legs in the baptismal tank, when a thought struck him. “Where are my dead forefathers at the present moment ?” said he. “In hell, with all other unbelievers,” was the rough and imprudent answer. “Mighty well,” replied the chief, removing his leg from the font, “Then I will

rather feast with my ancestors in the Hall of Woden, than dwell with your Christians in heaven." The truth is, the Christian Church has nowhere formulated in her creeds, any authorized opinion upon this subject; while, on the other hand, Scripture very plainly states that uncovenanted mercies do exist for the heathen.

RAM. Be pleased to adduce your evidence; for, if you can prove it satisfactorily to my mind, it will go far to reconcile me towards your faith.

BISHOP. Nothing is easier. S. Paul when speaking of the heathen who are without the knowledge of CHRIST, says, "*There is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.*"* Do not these verses plainly shew that, whether within or without the covenant of GOD, all evil doers will be condemned without respect of persons? Herein is the equity of GOD's moral dealing with men. So far from teaching us that the heathens will be damned because they are heathens; this passage declares that heathens and Christians will alike perish, only because of sin and unrighteousness. So far as judgement is concerned, therefore, GOD has not one method of condemning his covenant people, and another method of condemning the uncovenanted heathen. All are treated on the same common ground. Do you see the force of this?

RAM. Most distinctly. And so far good. But I expected you to shew me this of Mercy, rather than of Judgement.

BISHOP. The apostle in the same passage, immediately goes on to that side of the subject. For he adds,—"*When the heathen, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.*"† I ask, is not this an open recognition of GOD's willingness to accept the right moral conduct of heathens apart from direct revelation? Does it not unanswerably demonstrate that,

* Romans. ii. 11, 12.

† Rom. ii. 14. 15.

although out of the covenant, they are nevertheless capable of receiving mercy within a natural law of their own? Beside which, listen to a still more striking passage: "*God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.*"* Be sure, then, that no heathen will be judged at the last day by the laws of a Revelation of which he has never heard.

RAM. This exposition of your faith surprises me. I never before listened to such statements; which, if true, remove the main scope of my objections. But how can they be true, when your Scriptures, in other places, speak of the heathen as being "*dead in trespasses and sins,*"† and "*under the wrath of God.*"‡

BISHOP. It is certain that the main proportion of them are under that wrath, living gross evil lives and violating the first principles of even natural law. Yet, why should that surprise you? For even Christians who forsake GOD, and lead reprobate lives, are described in the same terms. S. Jude calls them "*twice dead,*"§ S. John speaks of them having "*a name to live, but are dead.*"|| S. Paul, speaking to such, says, "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.*"¶ Thus, you see how true it is that our GOD is, "*no respecter of persons.*" Whether in the covenant, or out of it, His "*wrath*" is equally threatened against all unrighteous doers. Consequently, when proclaimed against the heathen, it is not because they are out of the covenant; but because they sin against that law of nature which is written in their hearts, and which, as responsible and free moral agents, they are both capable of discovering, and are no less bound to obey. Does not that satisfy you?

RAM. Not fully. For I still remember how your Scriptures state that salvation can only come to man through faith in Christ and that all without such faith, must be damned. For example: "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"** If, then the heathen have not such faith, how can they be saved?

* Acts. x. 34.

† Eph. ii. 1.

‡ Eph. ii. 3.

§ S. Jude. v. 12.

|| Rev. iii. 1.

¶ Eph. v. 14.

** S. John. iii. 36.

BISHOP. Those words were only spoken of persons to whom the Revelation of the SON of GOD had been made; and had no reference whatever to the heathen.

RAM. I should like to be able to think so; for it would better reconcile me to the reasonableness of your religion. But they seem to me to be too dogmatic and universal to be interpreted as under that exception. Tell me the grounds upon which you make so strong an assertion.

BISHOP. It might be sufficient to rejoin, that the inherent equity of GOD requires such an interpretation. I will, however, pass by that reason, and refer you to the words of the SON of GOD Himself; who, when contending with the unbelieving Jews, said, "*If I had not come unto them, they had not had sin;*" (meaning the sin of unbelief) "*but now they have no cloke for their sin.*"* Do you not perceive from this, that condemnation for not receiving the SON of GOD is limited only to those who have the *opportunities* of belief, and who reject them? Now what was true of the Jews must be equally true of the heathen also. Other passages bear the same testimony. For example: *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.*"† Again, "*How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?*"‡ Do not such passages prove the rectitude of GOD's moral Government? Do they not satisfy you that no man on earth will be condemned for not having received the SON of GOD, unless he has first enjoyed some opportunity of hearing the truth concerning Him?

RAM. I perceive that, while my own knowledge is too partial, your Scriptures are able to commend themselves to my mind in this particular better than I expected. And yet I am not at present wholly satisfied. For, after all, there appears to be some inherent contradiction between your own statement that a good heathen may be saved by the uncovenanted mercy of God, notwithstanding his want of faith in Christ, and the statement of the New Testament which declares that "*there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they may be saved.*"§

* S. John. xv. 22.

† S. Luke. xii. 48.

‡ Rom. x. 14.

§ Acta. iv. 21.

How do you reconcile that discrepancy ?

BISHOP. There is no discrepancy. For whenever heathens are saved through the overflowing grace of GOD's uncovenanted love, it must alone be due to the meritorious Name and work of our Redeemer, even though they are unconscious of Him to whom their salvation is due.

RAM. I grow more interested as you proceed, although I do not quite comprehend you.

BISHOP. You must understand the teaching of Christianity to be as follows. All men, by reason of inherent sin, are justly exposed to the condemnation of GOD ; whose holiness demands the perfect surrender to Himself, both of our lives and hearts throughout a course of undeviating and blameless obedience. In this case there is no difference between ourselves and the heathen, Whether within the range of covenant promises or outside it, the fundamental debt which, as creatures, we alike owe to our Creator is the same. Accordingly in the language of our Scriptures, *"Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."** As, however, by this primary condition of the sovereignty of GOD in the moral government of men we all stand equally condemned before Him ; so by the powerful conditions of His grace and mercy in the Redeemer, we have all been alike redeemed from the necessity of such absolute condemnation. In that respect there is, again, no difference between the Christian and the heathen. We therefore, often call this Saviour, the *"Second Adam ;"* because in exactly the same way as we believe the entire human race to have been alienated from GOD by the fall of the *"First Adam ;"* we believe also that it has been, in its entirety, redeemed and reconciled to GOD, by the merit and mediation of CHRIST our *"Second Adam."* It is thus that even a heathen becomes capable of salvation, although he may never have heard the name of his Saviour. Scripture says : *"The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."*† *"He tasted death for every man."*‡ *"He taketh away the sin of the world."*§ *"He is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for*

* Rom. iii. 19.

† Tit. ii. 11.

‡ Heb. ii. 9.

§ S. John, i. 29.

ours only, but for the sin of the whole world."* By virtue of this worldwide Redemption, if those who are outside the visible covenant of the Christian Church "do by nature the things contained in the law," our LORD JESUS CHRIST has power to save them. In which case, while they, of course, know nothing consciously of their Deliverer, they are nevertheless as surely saved through His name as we Christians are. Does this surprise you? Take the case of children dying before the age of reason and moral responsibility. Are not such beyond the range of divine knowledge. Yet if irresponsible infants are to be deliberately excluded from salvation, because they have had no possible means of learning CHRIST, GOD must be treating millions of human beings as if Redemption had never been offered for them.

RAM. Although I do not understand the moral aspects of your theory of Redemption, yet I take no exception to the mode in which you have set forth your belief in its results. Those results seem to be widely beneficent, and broadly just towards the whole human race; and they escape the harsh judgement which I had formed of them. Indeed there may be, possibly, greater truth than I had supposed in the notion that we are both viewing the same God, apprehended under different modes of thought.

BISHOP. I suppose that from your own point of view you would regard the salvation of moral heathens, as the reward of their own merits.

RAM. Precisely.

BISHOP. That is not the way in which Christianity would view the case. On our side we should rather say that GOD saves such persons not on account of their own merits, but for the sake of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who has power to accept their imperfect yet sincere attempts in well doing, and to plead His own glorious work of Redemption on their behalf. We do not allow that the free-will service of any man, even in its best state, can ever be sufficiently meritorious to deserve eternal reward of itself. We believe that reward to be alone due to the meritorious mediation of the SON of GOD, who has all power to save vested in Himself, as

* 1. S. John. ii. 2.

the reward of His conquest over the curse of sin on behalf of mankind.

RAM. We must talk more of that hereafter, about which I entertain many serious difficulties. Touching the matter in hand, however, I confess that my difficulty has been fully removed.

DIALOGUE III.

RAMCHANDRA ENTERS UPON THE SUBJECT OF PUNISHMENT BY
EVERLASTING FIRE.

RAM. The courtesy of your lordship on the occasion of our two previous interviews induces me to renew my visit. If you will allow me, therefore, I would now enter upon another point, which greatly perplexes me. I allude to the subject of punishment for sin by the tortures of eternal fire ; and I must confess that, on this point, I await your explanation with an almost irritable impatience. For, if the God of justice can only be satisfied by the shrieks and wails of suffering humanity in burning flames for endless ages, the unmercifulness of such punishment appears to me to be no whit better than the demoniacal beliefs which belong to our worst forms of Hinduism under the worship of Bhutisvara and Kali.

BISHOP. At any rate you possess the art of expressing yourself with considerable force.

RAM. I am only anxious to discuss with full freedom this great subject of divine retribution after death, in order that I may hear what your own enlightened thoughtfulness has to say about it. You have fairly vindicated the character of your God as one of goodness and mercy, who can save even the heathen when He sees them struggling in their darkness after truth and righteousness. I wish therefore, to understand how you will vindicate His character, when plunging the wicked into a lake of unquenchable fire, from which they will have no escape throughout eternity. I feel bound to tell you that, in view of such an inexorably cruel picture of never ending vengeance, I shrink back from your religion with a shudder. Your lordship will, I know, forgive

this utterance. I speak strongly in order to bring out your reply with as much force as your best resources can command.

BISHOP. My resources are extremely simple; as are all the defences of truth. Have you ever studied Geography by the use of the globes?

RAM. I have. Your question, however, strikes me as both abrupt and extraordinary.

BISHOP. Never mind its abruptness; but answer me. What would be the effect of trying to measure upon a globe the distance between London and Calcutta by means of an ivory ruler?

RAM. For accuracy it would be of very little use.

BISHOP. Why?

RAM. Because the measuring instrument would be incapable of adapting itself to the spherical surface.

BISHOP. Then it is clear that, for measuring lines over the surface of maps and globes, we must use different sorts of instruments, if we desire to insure accuracy.

RAM. Even so.

BISHOP. Is it not the same in regard to the method by which we need to interpret different styles of written composition? The same rule will not always avail if we wish to be accurate and just. For instance, if you were to apply the hard and flat foot-rule of literal interpretation to expressions which are obviously figurative, would you not fall into egregious blunders? Would you not have to believe from the language of Scripture that GOD possesses a human shape, having hands and eyes, ears and feet.

RAM. Doubtless.

BISHOP. Yet this is exactly what you are doing with reference to such phrases as "*the lake of fire and brimstone*," and "*the fire that never shall be quenched*." You are measuring the meaning of these terms with the wrong instrument. You are interpreting the metaphorical and the figurative by the foot rule of the literal. Is this right or just? Or is it consistent with any due taste for literary culture?

RAM. On what grounds do you so assuredly speak of these expressions as having no literal signification? They have certainly not been treated as figurative expressions in past ages; nor

are they regarded in that sense by any of your religion whom I have ever heard preach.

BISHOP. As for what you may have heard in our pulpits, I can answer nothing; for I regret to say that too many preachers, in their rhetorical earnestness, not only forget to use the language of thoughtful criticism, but rush on with an impassioned declamation which fails to weigh the due import of its words. Nor am I responsible for the vulgar and traditional use of these expressions in common conversation and nursery talk; nor for the method in which they were treated during the past ages of ignorant superstition. What I really am responsible for is to shew you that the Church of Christ has never actually formulated any belief upon the nature of everlasting punishment in hell fire. You will not find a single reference to this subject either in the Apostles', or the Nicene Creed; and even, in the Athanasian Creed, the simple expressions of Scripture are employed, without the least attempt to interpret their meaning. There is, therefore, no dogmatic teaching of the Church, as to whether they ought to be taken literally or figuratively. It is simply a matter of biblical criticism. Suffer me to explain to you some of the critical grounds upon which a figurative, rather than a literal interpretation is necessary,

RAM. I shall feel deeply grateful.

BISHOP. Do you remember a New Testament parable in which Dives, a rich, luxurious worldling is described as being after death, in the "*flames of hell*"?

RAM. Perfectly.

BISHOP. And do you also recollect that, in the same parable, Lazarus, a good, but poor man, is described as being, after death, in "*Abraham's bosom*"?

RAM. Undoubtedly.

BISHOP. Will you not allow, then that, if this scene is to be viewed as a literal representation of facts "*Abraham's bosom*" must be quite as literally interpreted as "*the tormenting flame*"? Can the language in one part of the scene be figurative, and in the other literal?

RAM. It would be mere captiousness to insist on that point.

BISHOP. Again, must not this scene be strictly applied to the

whole mass of mankind, as well as to those two individual types ?

RAM. Certainly.

BISHOP. Then observe the ridiculous result. Dives, you tell me, is tormented in literal flames, and Lazarus is literally lying on Abraham's bosom. Now apply this last piece of interpretation to the whole mass of the saved. Is it conceivable that millions of saved mortals should be literally reposing upon Abraham's bosom ? Is it not, obviously a figurative method of denoting that all such persons are in a state of happiness ? On your own confession, therefore, the "*tormenting flame*" must be no less a figurative method of denoting the pangs of sorrow and remorse which will have to be endured by all who are excluded from heaven. Is not this criticism sound ?

RAM. It is drawn, however, only from a parable, the symbolical character of which gives you an advantage ; and of which, like a skilful debater, you have not been slow to avail yourself.

BISHOP. You are mistaken. I am prepared to go into the subject apart from parabolic teaching.

RAM. Pray do so.

BISHOP. I presume you will allow (speaking generally of any book or writer,) that, if the same state of things were described under various phrases, and that if such phrases, when taken in each case literally, utterly contradicted each other, we should then be bound to interpret them figuratively ; dismissing all literal interpretations as impossible because self contradictory.

RAM. Before committing myself to a reply I should like you to give me an illustration of your meaning.

BISHOP. Suppose, for example, that I found a writer speaking of the same place, sometimes as a sea of icebergs ; at other times as a spring of boiling waters ; and afterwards as a waste and arid wilderness ; how could these various phrases be regarded as literally true ? Should I not have to say to myself,—The author is here speaking figuratively, regarding the same place under different modes of thought ; for that alone makes his meaning intelligible ?

RAM. I must admit it ; seeing that it is impossible for the same place to be, at once, icy cold, boiling hot, and aridly dry, in

any literal sense.

BISHOP. Yet this is exactly analogous with the point under discussion. For whereas the place of eternal punishment is sometimes called "a lake of fire," and at other times is spoken of as a region of "outer darkness;" do you not see that these expressions, when each is interpreted literally, mutually contradict and destroy one another? If then, they cannot each be literally true, are we not driven to interpret both figuratively?

But more than this. The same place is, described in Scripture as a bastinado ground where the sufferers are "*beaten with stripes.*" Again the same retribution is called, "*the worm that never dies?*" In other words, the place of retribution is no longer a bastinado ground, but a grave-yard of never ending putrification. How can each of these pictures be literally true? Such an interpretation would only make the language of Scripture obscure and meaningless. On the other hand, when we interpret these various phrases figuratively, they at once become coherent and powerful. Each represents the anguish of a conscience which is consumed by self-reproach, under the recollection of opportunities and of hopes lost for ever. The "*flaming fire,*" the "*outer darkness,*" the "*many stripes*" and the "*gnawing worm,*" then fall each into their proper places, all alike setting forth one and the same idea, *viz.*, the sorrow of a heart which is "burnt" "darkened," "lashed" and "eaten up," under loss of heavenly joys throughout eternity. That is to say, Hell is not a place of actual "fire," nor of literal "darkness," nor of material "whips," nor of tangible "worms." These are only oriental methods of description, by which the moral condition of lost souls is brought before us, in order to make it more vivid and impressive.

RAM. I see it all, and am satisfied; and thank you more than words can express. It takes from your religion much which I previously felt incredible; and therefore, so far reconciles me to it. Punishment such as you have just intimated, arising out of the moral condition of evil men left helpless at their death, is in no way inconsistent with my own idea of the moral Governor of mankind. You have, however, still to tell me how an infinitely merciful God can ordain punishment for a short period of evil,

so inexorably severe as to leave the guilty without any hope of amelioration or renovation throughout the endless ages of eternity.

BISHOP. An eternity of remorse, under perpetual exclusion from the glory of GOD, and that, within a body of immortal life, is a subject so full of unfathomable mystery, and so unutterably awful in its character, that I scarcely even dare to contemplate it.

RAM. Then you admit the absoluteness of eternal duration in reference to this painful subject? You make no attempt to interpret metaphorically?

BISHOP. Such a course would only be an act of insincerity and dishonesty, considering the explicit language of our Scriptures.

RAM. I admire your lordship's candour. How, then, do you reconcile it with the goodness and justice of God?

BISHOP. The future will do that for us, if you only have humility and faith and patience to wait for the disclosure.

RAM. Does not that remark involve an abnegation of reason which is perfectly inconsistent with the dignity of the human mind?

BISHOP. On the contrary, it is rather an exercise of reason, than an abnegation of it. For, reason alone tells me that, at present, the secret is undiscoverable; and that, in the future, every thing will be explained.

RAM. You do not satisfy me.

BISHOP. Why not? Are there not constant analogies to this in our daily life? Let me quote you a passage, taken from one of our English newspapers called the "Pall Mall Gazette," which I read only to-day with reference to a debate in the French assembly. It says, "The debate and division of Monday has no doubt, a secret history; which, when it is known, will make the event clear." Thus you see that, even in human affairs, men are content to wait for the disclosures of the future, in order to unravel the mysteries of the present! Why should not the same exercise of reason be applied to the unresolved mystery of future retribution?

RAM. Because, when a revelation is given, we expect every

thing to be clear. Of what use is a revelation, if it requires a new revelation to interpret it ?

BISHOP. The object of a divine revelation is to make all things plain which concern our present faith and duty ; not necessarily to make all things plain which concern the infinity of the future. Have you ever looked through a telescope ?

RAM. Frequently.

BISHOP. Did it ever occur to your mind, that the instrument was defective, because, when, after having brought out clearly many distant objects which you would never have discovered with your naked eye, it did not also pierce through the distant mountains, and shew you all which lay beyond them ?

RAM. That may be a clever illustration for your own purpose ; but it does not settle my difficulties : For there is a vast difference between a human instrument like the telescope and a divine revelation from heaven. The one we expect to be finite and imperfect ; the other, not so. I confess, that, if I believed in a revelation like yours, I should be staggered by its partial disclosure of the infinite future in regard to this terrible doctrine. Why has it left us to contend with these gigantic doubts and difficulties ? Why has it postponed their settlement to a future life ?

BISHOP. Did you ever go through a course of mathematics ?

RAM. Yes.

BISHOP. Did your teacher instruct you in Differential and Integral Calculus at the same time that he grounded you in the elements of Algebra ?

RAM. Certainly not.

BISHOP. He was wise. For, until you had learned Algebra, you could never have mastered the difficulties of the other subjects. Will you not allow that, if he had placed the higher ranges of mathematical study before your mind at first, you would have been unduly puzzled and perplexed ?

RAM. I cannot deny it.

BISHOP. Then you must honestly admit that, in the revelations of mathematical science, it is well to proceed gradually, so as not to cloud the mind of a pupil with all the future of it at once ?

RAM. So far, I am obliged to yield.

BISHOP. But why stop there? Is it not the same in all other branches of learning? Is a child likely to become truly wise, who has all the higher and more abstruse parts of a study given to him, before he is set to its simple and more elementary parts? Now, in regard to the Revelation of divine truths, are we not all like children sitting at the feet of a heavenly Teacher? Why, then, should you suppose that our divine Teacher ought to reveal the whole secrets of eternity at a glance? Is it not much more natural to expect, even *a priori*, that GOD would hold in reserve the more difficult problems of religious truth, until we had first become instructed in the simpler? Do you not think that if the revelation of a whole eternity, with all its complex movements were made known to us in our present state of immaturity, our minds might be more perplexed than they even now are? The proper time has not yet arrived for such disclosures. Why should we be impatient and petulant? Let us not be like boys at school, who, because they have got into the Greek *Delectus*, imagine that they can unriddle the majesty of Demosthenes, or Thucydides.

RAM. You have given me a series of very interesting illustrations which have admirably suited your own argument; but they are not arguments in themselves. As well might I take up a counter illustration; and say that, as the mind of man can penetrate toward inconceivably distant measurements among the stars, so he could equally grasp the revelation of an illimitable futurity.

BISHOP. You forget that the problems connected with a material universe, and those connected with a spiritual have altogether different measurements. In the former we know the laws which regulate it, and we can arrange results however vast, with perfect order and accuracy. The machinery for doing it is in our own hands. But in the latter, it is otherwise. A further revelation of the spiritual and remotely future universe would probably bring in new laws and processes of which we know nothing now, and of which we could form little or no conception. They would consequently perplex us to no purpose, and make

Revelation far more difficult than it is at the point where it now terminates. This is why I say "the time has not yet arrived for the final disclosures of eternity." We should need enlarged faculties, and more extended knowledge before we could properly grasp these things; and, therefore, they are reasonably and mercifully withheld from us.

RAM. Why should you expect any revelation of new laws and processes connected with the moral government of God in a future world? Are not His attributes unchangeable, and His laws of action in the moral world as constant and invariable as His laws of action in the material world?

BISHOP. True. Yet, in the material world, we have them all before us; and the results of their action are transparent, because the medium through which we see them is either present to our eye, or patent to our mind. When called, however, to trace the moral laws of God in the coming ages of eternity, their action has to be viewed through a medium which is not present, and which, if fully presented to us, might so refract their light, and complicate their appearance, as to render them unintelligible.

RAM. Then you are content to remain satisfied with this dreadful doctrine of eternal and unchangeable punishment, without ever exercising your own reason upon its?

BISHOP. That is quite a different matter. I suppose there are few thoughtful Christians who have not searched through Scripture for the purpose of discovering whether there may not possibly be some outlet of hope within this eternal condemnation. All we contend for, is, that, failing to discover any evidence of this, we are not to distrust the wisdom or mercy of God, but rather wait in humility for the future, when all His ways will be most abundantly justified.

RAM. Can you throw no ray of light on the subject?

BISHOP. I can so far exercise reason as to perceive that Scripture only states the doctrine of eternal condemnation, in reference to an exclusion from the covenanted glory of heaven in the presence of God and His holy Angels. In that sense no believing Christian can doubt the eternity of punishment and remorse. Nevertheless I am not staggered by this, for I know not what

changes may take place within an eternal exile of which we have no revelation. The real difficulty lies only in our own ignorance. As the ways of GOD are unmistakeably right and just, floods of light on this appalling subject must be lying in the distant background which will ultimately make every difficulty plain. Hence I humble the pride of my reason, and I await the eternal future.

RAM. But meanwhile, have you nothing further to say?

BISHOP. It would only be speculative and presumptuous if I were to indulge in figments of unrevealed possibilities. If for instance, I were to tell you that, while the wicked must for ever be excluded from those rewards which the righteous will enjoy, because of their moral unfitness for such holy blessedness, there is yet nothing in Scripture forbidding us to believe that, within those vast depths of eternal separation from their saved brethren, GOD may have other methods by which pathways of amelioration may be opened to them. If I were to tell you this, to what purpose would it be? A veil is drawn over the whole subject by my Heavenly Father. Why, then, should I lift it up? The only thing I can say for certain, is, that GOD remains holy, and just, and good; and that, whatever difficulties this revelation of eternal judgement may now present, He will one day solve them Himself in the open light of eternity through a final triumph over moral evil by the slow yet all conquering forces of divine love.

RAM. The last words you have uttered embody a magnificent idea. Perhaps, I have been too hasty in my judgements. It is possible that, after all, I may have been viewing your God through a medium of misconception, which has tinged His character with an implacable vengeance not properly belonging to Him.

DIALOGUE IV.

RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES CONCERNING THE ALLEGED IMPLACABILITY OF GOD IN HIS MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.

RAMCHANDRA. I visit your lordship to-day in order to inquire respecting the apparently implacable and revengeful character which your Scriptures assign to the God of Israel. I refer to the severity of the law of Moses ; to the adoption of the inhuman system of slavery ; and to the terrible extermination of the Canaanites, and Midianites ; all of which, with many other things, appear to be contrary to the spirit of a God of mercy and love. Indeed I should rather call them the revelation of a despotic Deity, whose merciless cruelty has only been equalled by some of the worst specimens of tyranny which have been exhibited within the annals of human history. Let me crave forgiveness if I have pained you.

BISHOP. The freedom with which you speak, at any rate, justifies me in an equal expression of plainness. Allow me to say, therefore, that your words imply a flippancy and a superficiality which are quite inconsistent with the language of any careful inquirer.

RAM. How ? I have read your Bible, and I ask, what language can be too strong to impeach the unmercifulness which appointed a faithful prophet to be torn to pieces by a lion, only because he had been led into disobedience through an act of inadvertent thoughtlessness ? (I. Kings, xiii.) Or, what expression can be too indignant in condemning that vindictiveness which could stone a man to death, only because he gathered a few sticks upon the Sabbath-day. Are these the ordinances of a God of love ?

BISHOP. Your questions might have force, if you could prove

that such temporal judgements involved the penalty of eternal death. Yet there is not the slightest ground for believing this in the case of punishment for inadvertent sins in Israel.

RAM. The denial is easy enough. But how do you prove it?

BISHOP. Because the whole system of God's moral government, as revealed in the Mosaic dispensation, was simply that of *temporal* rewards and punishments. The doctrine of eternal life and death is not so much as once named in the law of Moses. That law appealed to the conscience of the chosen people through hopes and fears of an earthly, rather than of a heavenly character. The higher and more spiritual sanctions of God's law were evolved only gradually, through successive Revelations; nor were they fully consummated till that period when, as it is written, "*Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*"* You must recollect that the people of Israel were at this time only emerging from a state of oppression, and darkness of mind, which made temporal rewards and punishments far more suited to their dull hearts than sanctions of a more spiritual nature would have been. In this respect, therefore, GOD dealt with them as a wise Father, who treated them according to their capacities of receiving truth, to whom Providential mercies and severities were best adapted. It does not follow, however, that all the severities which He thus inflicted on them, by way of warning and chastisement on earth, were followed by corresponding severities in the world to come.

RAM. Your answer is extremely ingenious. Yet it strikes me, if I may say so, as only invented in order to give you an escape from what you feel yourself to be a most serious difficulty.

BISHOP. Excuse me; the position I take in this argument is capable of absolute proof from Scripture. I mean to say that we have the most unmistakeable evidence of temporal death and judgment being inflicted on good men, of whose final salvation there can be no possible question. One instance is as good as a dozen. Take the case, therefore, of Moses, who died under the judgment of GOD, and was exiled from the promised land of Canaan, simply because he "*spake unadvisedly with his lips.*"† Neverthe-

* 2. Tim. i. 10.

† Psalm. cvi. 33.

less Moses appeared with Elias in glory to the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Hence his penal death was no argument for his damnation. And that being so, by parity of reasoning, we have no right to say that, in the case to which you have referred, there was any difference.

RAM. You have escaped from the dilemma better than I expected. What will you say, however, to the unmercifulness which ordained the butchery of women and helpless babes in cold blood?

BISHOP. Do you refer to the particular mode of their death or to their sudden death under any circumstances?

RAM. It matters not. Had they been destroyed in any other manner, it would have been all one.

BISHOP. Do you then impeach the wisdom and goodness of GOD, when a pestilence sweeps away thousands of women and helpless children; or when an earthquake engulfs a large city?

RAM. No; because those are cases in which the laws of nature inexorably bring their own results, apart from the moral government of God.

BISHOP. I do not perceive any difference between them, so far as impeachment of GOD's goodness is concerned. For you might easily contend that a GOD of infinite wisdom, power and mercy would never have ordained laws by which such remorseless catastrophes could occur.

RAM. There is this difference; that, in natural catastrophes, such as those to which you have referred, man exercises no barbarity towards his fellows; whereas, in the massacres to which I refer, man was made the direct instrument of vengeance; being thereby rendered a brutalized agent of judgement, whose regeneration must have become impeded by it rather than promoted. How can this consist with the ordination of a righteous moral Governor?

BISHOP. That is just the point to which I wish to bring you. Tell me, if you please, whether you think a just and good king would allow large hordes of robbers to go throughout his dominions, pillaging his sanctuaries, violating the homes of his virtuous and peaceable subjects, without sending out an armed force to

destroy them? Would not his goodness and mercy be even more pledged to protect the innocent, than to shelter such a community of ruffians by mistimed patience and clemency? Would not false leniency in such a case be weakness rather than mercy? And would not mercy be triumphant only at the expense both of virtue and of justice?

RAM. Even then I should call such a king a very merciless tyrant, if he were to slay women and children.

BISHOP. Yes; because, in the absence of all future knowledge, hope would be bound to expect some amendment of manners among such persons. But, if for ignorance of the future, you substitute divine Omniscience, which foreknew that through the inveteracy of moral taint, these persons would only live to rear up another generation of similar rebels and ruffians, then the case would be very different. I put it in this way, because it is exactly parallel with the one before us. For GOD, as the moral Governor of His chosen people, had, at this period of the world's history, to deal with nations of long confirmed and incurable viciousness; with offenders whose violent criminality, and whose irrepressible outbursts of corruption were known by Him to be too deep for amendment. The question arose, therefore, whether these rising tides of evil were to triumph over the land, and submerge all piety. The mercy which would have allowed so fatal a termination of events, would have been an indictment against the divine holiness. Hence one race utterly demoralised was exterminated, in order that another might be permitted to commence a new period of probation with better results.

RAM. Your argument, good, so far as it goes, fails in the purpose we have at issue. For an earthly king has temporal power merely; and, therefore, must needs imprison or execute such criminals for the purgation of his kingdom. But God has moral forces at His disposal, by which Omnipotence can devise other remedial measures without having recourse to the cruelty of wholesale extermination.

BISHOP. There were no further measures of a moral nature, adequate to the case, short of forcible coercion into obedience, and I thought we had already agreed that such a method of over-

powering the freedom of human will was incompatible with the divine glory. You must remember that the Canaanites had already been treated with patience and forbearance for hundreds of years before their dread punishment. We read in Genesis that, "*the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*;"* meaning that, although spared long opportunity of repentance, they were still growing worse and worse. After this prolonged period of longsuffering probation, therefore, what remained but judgment? In the process of regenerating a corrupted world, even Omnipotence itself cannot be wholly exercised on the side of mercy; otherwise the freewill of man, determined to abide on the side of evil, would finally overpower everything good. Thus, when Israel came into the land of Canaan, if mercy had gone on longer with her indulgences, evil would have finally triumphed over good. I must repeat it again and again, that this has been the problem which the moral government of GOD has had to solve during the whole history of the world, viz., how to elevate men who were hopelessly depraved into a state of willing allegiance, without violating the sacred principle of free agency and of moral responsibility. Probation throughout centuries, therefore, having been afforded for that purpose, irreclaimable obstinacy having been the result, no middle course was left between unavailing mercy, or irreparable judgement.

RAM. Even granting your argument, I cannot understand the moral government of your God in making Israel His battle axe for the execution of His judgements; inasmuch as, by doing so, He must have hardened the hearts of His chosen people, and rather hindered their social regeneration, than promoted it.

BISHOP. There are two sides to that question. For while, on the one hand, this course may have had a tendency, as you say, to harden their hearts; on the other hand, the fact that it was revealed to them as a special and exceptional act of judgement must have had a tendency to overawe their minds, and subjugate them to more willing obedience in other respects. At all events, such acts of extraordinary severity were balanced in their moral effect

* Gen. xv. 16.

by many instances of wonderful tenderness and mercy which the laws of Moses enforced, and which must have gradually tended to elevate the moral feelings of Israel and to lift them up to a higher state of civilisation.

RAM. It does not strike me that there could have been much moral elevation under laws which enacted the institution of slavery! How could anything good or noble result from such an utter degradation of human liberty?

BISHOP. It is true that this system was tolerated by GOD; being an element of social life common at that time to all nations. Yet so wonderfully modified and mitigated was it, through provisions of exceptional humanity and tenderness, that, under the law of Moses it became robbed of its greatest bitterness, and stood out from the slavery of other nations as something perfectly distinct and separate. Are you aware of this? In surrounding countries, for instance, a slave once secured was a slave for ever, unless his master willingly freed him. In Israel, however, it was not so. Listen to this statute:—"*If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing,*"* Again, in other lands, slaves were allowed to be put to death by their masters; whereas, by the law of Moses; "*If a man smote his servant with a rod, and he died,*" it was enacted that the master, "*should be surely punished.*"† Nay, it was even said:—"*If a man smite the eye of his servant that it perish, he shall let him go for his eye's sake*"‡ Were not these provisions of a civilising and humanising character, when contrasted with the barbarities of slavery as practised among the heathen nations? Mark again, the following law.—"*Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped unto thee. He shall dwell with thee in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.*"§ Does not this prove that, while a system of bondage was permitted to Israel in conformity with that imperfect state of society which then existed throughout the nations, it was nevertheless

* Ex. xxi. 2.

† Ex. xxi. 20.

‡ Ex. xxi. 26.

§ Deut. xxiii. 15-16.

moderated and lightened as far as possible? Is not the non-extradition of slaves and refugees one of the chief glories of Great Britain? And does not this statute of Moses exactly harmonise with our own sense of the rights of personal liberty? The various ameliorations of bondage which I have now brought before you ought surely to suffice for the purpose of shewing you how utterly different bondservice was in Israel from its savage conditions among the surrounding heathen.

RAM. I cannot deny that you have made out a good case. These facts are all new to me.

BISHOP. So with other proofs of humanity under the law of Moses. Let me read you a passage from the next chapter. "*Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*"* Again:—"Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child† And again:—"If thou lend money to any of my people who are poor by thee, thou shalt not lay upon him usury." "If thou take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his only covering."‡ Tell me, were any laws, so generous and gracious as these, known throughout Egypt, Chaldea, or Assyria? Could Greece or Rome boast such? Nay do they not exceed, in tenderness of spirit, and in deep commiseration for the wants of the poor, all that is found, even among our modern Christian nationalities? Must you not candidly admit that, by this species of moral education, GOD was gradually lifting up His people to a higher life, notwithstanding much which was otherwise terrible and severe in His laws and judgements?

RAM. I had never noticed these points. You may certainly score one point more on your lordship's side of the controversy.

BISHOP. Yet I have by no means finished. Let us proceed to the following chapter, which touches on the duty of kindness even to our enemies.

RAM. How can that be: since Jesus Christ quoted Moses as saying. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemies*"?

BISHOP. Excuse me. He was not quoting Moses, but only the

* Ex. xxii. 21.

† Ex. xxii. 22.

‡ Ex. xxii. 25-26.

false interpretation and gloss which Jewish tradition had put upon the Mosaic law. The words of our Lord were :—" *Ye have heard that it hath been said. Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*"* Said. But by whom? Certainly not by Moses. For, listen to the lawgiver's own words :—" *If thou meet thine enemy's ox, or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden thou shalt surely help him.*"† I put it to you as a candid and honest reader whether this was not the publication of a law, breathing a kindness and benevolence such as were totally unknown among the nations of antiquity? Was it not calculated to improve the moral culture, and to refine the civilization of GOD's chosen people? Did it not tend to put them on a higher platform of social life than that on which their heathen contemporaries were standing? Where had those nations any such encouragements to personal politeness, and unselfish consideration for other men's feelings?

RAM. You may make another score now, my lord. I confess myself greatly astonished at these statements.

BISHOP. I should weary you if I were to complete the list which might be brought. Yet listen to one or two more. There are some other gentle, humane, and polite injunctions within the laws of Moses which, if you have never noticed, will still further surprise you. Here is one, for example, taken out of the book of Leviticus :—" *When ye reap the harvest, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy fields; neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.*"‡ See also, at your leisure, a passage in Deuteronomy xxiv. 19-21. And in the 5th verse of that chapter, mark an extraordinarily tender statute, to which, as far as I am aware, there has never been a parallel in any nation of the world :—" *When a man hath taken a wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shalt he shall be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.*"

* S. Matt. v. 43.

† Ex. xxiii. 4-5.

‡ Lev. xix. 9-10.

RAM. What a singular law ! I had no idea that politeness and compassionate endearments toward women were thus intertwined with your divine revelation ? It appears as though the age of Christian chivalry had been antedated !

BISHOP. Yes ; and if you study the history of Boaz and Ruth, you will find the spirit of chivalry illustrated in a further manner. The fact is, that, just as chivalry in the middle ages of Christendom tended to lift society out of barbarism by engendering respect for women, and an unselfish nobility of character ; so the law of Moses tended, by similar means, to elevate and civilize the Hebrews above their cruel and semi-barbaric neighbours. I mention these things in order to convince you that, while the severity of judgement which GOD ordained against the corrupt and incorrigible Canaanite may appear to have been unrelentingly implacable, its effect upon the Hebrew people was counteracted and modified by laws of a gentle and humanising character.

RAM. I acknowledge in all candour that there has been great force in your reasoning.

BISHOP. The more so, when you remember what I have already enforced, *viz.*, that the Hebrews, being in a degraded and semi-civilized state by reason of their long oppression in Egypt, must have been utterly incapable of understanding, as we do, the highest standards of social life. They required to be elevated and purified gradually, by a due admixture of judgment and mercy, of severity and gentleness ; and by a system of administration which, without contraversing their personal freedom of responsibility, would leave them nothing too difficult of attainment under the circumstances of their imperfect education.

RAM. I never had the case set before me in so clear a light. I see its reasonableness, and am considerably impressed by your arguments. You must, however, give me time to reflect ; for I am sure you would not value my judgment any the better, if I yielded to your reasoning on the mere impulse of the moment.

BISHOP. By no means. Conviction is born of reflection. May the good Spirit of our GOD assist you in the settlement of this, as well as of all your other difficulties.

DIALOGUE V.

RAMCHANDRA CHALLENGES THE BISHOP TO DEFEND THE CREDIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE MIRACLES.

RAMCHANDRA. I am somewhat afraid that the repeated visits which I inflict on your lordship will soon become wearisome, even if they have not already become so ; but love of truth is my impelling motive, and therefore I trust you will pardon me.

BISHOP. You need not offer an apology, pray continue your inquiries.

RAM. I am almost afraid that you regard me as a complainer rather than as an inquirer. I cannot, however, bow down to authority until my reason has been convinced.

BISHOP. Nor do I desire it. Faith, unless supported by reason, is little better than superstition. What is it which is now upon your mind ?

RAM. The improbability of your religion being true from the fact of its being based on such a series of legendary miracles.

BISHOP. If, instead of making inquiries you begin by taking it for granted that our scripture miracles are legends, all argument must be hopeless. Our Revelation must then be invalidated, because mixed up with fables and lies, Why do you start with such a dogmatic assumption ?

RAM. Because the attestation of a miracle is contrary to the general experience of mankind ; and because, considering the invariability of the laws of nature, (which is a fixed doctrine in science), it must always be infinitely more probable that the attestator of any alleged miracle should be deceived, than that the immutable laws of nature should have been interfered with.

BISHOP Let us take each of your objections in order. You

say, in the first place, that the attestation of a miracle is contrary to the general experience of mankind. Granted. But what you have to postulate is, that the attestation of miracles is contrary to the *universal* experience of mankind. Some years ago it was contrary to the general experience of mankind for human thought to be conveyed in a few minutes from one hemisphere to the other. Yet facts now shew that this is not contrary to experience universally. We must therefore, distinguish between an attestation which is only *general*, and that which may possibly be, if found, within the range of *universal* testimony. Conditions of the world may have existed in the distant past of which we possess no experience at present; just as we now have conditions of the world which were totally unknown to remote antiquity. Hence, to speak confidently about human experience as an attestation of the possibility or impossibility of any alleged facts, we should be required to have existed through all the conditions of past time; because, without that lengthened experience, our knowledge, however general, would not have been universal.

RAM. We can only reason from the universal order of things around us at the present moment.

BISHOP. That remark seems to come under the head of your second objection. You imply that, as the universal order of things around us is fixed and invariable, it is far more likely that the attestator of any so called supernatural event should be mistaken than that the alleged supernatural event should have happened. In this I perfectly agree with you. Under the present conditions of our world, no divine interference with natural law can be reasonably predicated; inasmuch as we can now discover no analogy with the past in order to account for any new and unexpected display of Omnipotence.

RAM. How would the modern attestator of some newly alleged and unexpected act of Omnipotence lack argument for its reality by want of analogy with the past? What modern analogy with the past would your lordship suggest for the purpose of making the cases parallel?

BISHOP. I should remind such a witness, that, in the past, when, as we believe, supernatural acts were credibly attested,

a divine *Revelation* was being communicated for the benefit of mankind. I should remind him that, under such circumstances, and under such alone, did Omnipotence interfere with the laws of nature, in order that it might give authority and confirmation to this newly revealed will of GOD ; I should add, however, that this Revelation having long been completed, and a new creation of moral and spiritual life having been deposited in the world for its ultimate regeneration, there is now no further reason for any such miraculous agencies ; and that, consequently, no analogy exists between the past and the present. Consider the supernatural in the remote past. Did you not tell me in our first interview that you believed in a Personal GOD who was the Creator of the world ? From that point let us start. I ask, must not the work of this first creation have proceeded from a direct act of Omnipotence ? And must it not have introduced a new condition of things, differing widely from that which had previously existed ?

RAM. No Theist can deny the first grand miracle of creation. But, that having been accomplished, every department of nature has since been working according to invariable and immutable laws, which exclude special interventions and arbitrary interruptions.

BISHOP. Are you aware that scientific philosophers are quite unable to prove that life was self-originated from inorganic matter ?

RAM. I have read of the experiments performed by Professor Tyndall in England for the purpose of testing the theory of what is called spontaneous generation. And I believe you are quite correct in your assertion that the power of modern science has not yet succeeded in discovering any proof of the possibility of the generation of organic life from inert matter.

BISHOP. If so, is it not reasonable to suppose that the introduction of organic life into the world must have resulted from an exercise of Omnipotence in a separate or second act of creation ?

RAM. You are certainly at liberty to say so, as long as science is unable to assert the contrary.

BISHOP. Then you are bound to admit that we are not un-

reasonable, when we believe in, at least, *one* intervention of Supernatural agency after the first order of creation had been established.

RAM. That is true. Nevertheless, the laws of organic life having been originated, they must have acted according to fixed and immutable methods of procedure ; or, at all events, within methods of procedure, from which there were no variations beyond limits which confessedly lay outside the range of miracle. I therefore, do not see how it bears upon our argument.

BISHOP. It so far bears upon our argument, as supplying that which is lacking in our present experience ; upon which experience you laid so much stress a little while ago. For it shews that, if any fresh purpose is to be achieved which is of sufficient importance to demand new acts of Omnipotence, such acts may form part of the method of GOD's government ; and that, consequently, when viewed in the abstract, repetitions of the Supernatural cannot be antecedently *impossible*.

RAM. So long as any new purpose of God be designed for the furtherance of his ends in *creation*, I can allow that your argument in favour of the Supernatural from what has been to what may be, is sound. But none of your Scripture miracles were of this sort. Not one of them was professedly designed to effect any new purposes of God in creation.

BISHOP. On the contrary, all of them were exercises of Omnipotence by means of which a new form of creation was introduced into the world.

RAM. I am at a loss to understand your meaning.

BISHOP. Did you not allow, in our opening dialogue, that man had, by some means, fallen from his originally created purity ; and that the whole mass of mankind became morally ruined and disintegrated through that event ?

RAM. I did.

BISHOP. Then do you not think that a special Revelation, if given by GOD for the purpose of regenerating the world, and of restoring to man, through a Redeemer, all which he had lost by that fall ; nay, of elevating him ultimately after death, to a higher condition, both morally and materially, than that which he had pos-

sessed before, do you not think that such a design would be a new creation ?

RAM. It might perhaps be called so.

BISHOP. Well, then, as you allow that there may have been a place for the Supernatural, provided its exercises were intended to introduce some new department of *creation*, I simply take you on your own ground, and reply that divine Revelation *was* intended for that very object ; and that, consequently, the argument in favour of our Scripture miracles, derived from an analogy with the past procedure of divine administration, is, on your own shewing, unanswerable.

RAM. There is this great difference between the two ; that in instances of natural creation, however often those acts may have been repeated, each was one homogeneous act of Omnipotence, not for a moment contravening the regularity of the laws of nature which had been previously constituted ; whereas, in the instances of what you call new creation, Omnipotence is recorded as having been in a state of frequent interference with the regularity of natural laws. The analogy which you have, therefore, drawn so ingeniously between the genesis of the world, and the genesis of Revelation, in respect to their supernatural accompaniments, seems to be entirely lost.

BISHOP. I grant you there is a difference between these exercises of Omnipotence. But you surely will not argue that the work of Omnipotence must necessarily be tied up to one uniform method of action. What ground is there in reason for saying this ?

RAM. It may be quite true that finite judgment cannot limit the infinite. At the same time, when we look back to the character of the Supernatural in the first creation, and discover in it no interference with preexisting laws, I think I have a right to find fault, if you base your argument for the truth of the Supernatural in a new creation, on that which contains nothing but a long series of interferences with existing laws.

BISHOP. You forget that, once granting the antecedent *possibility* of any thing supernatural, we have not only to consider the character of it, but also its object. Now the object of the Superna-

tural in the first creation was simply *formative* ; whereas, the object of the Supernatural in Revelation, was not only formative, but *evidential* ; being intended to give outward evidence and moral credence to a new order of divine government. From this point of view, we have a reasonable ground for believing that the whole character of the Supernatural would have been altered. For, in the first case, no moral sense or conscience required to be affected ; whereas, in the last case, the entire problem was, how Omnipotence could affect the darkened understanding and hardened conscience of man by testifying to the reality of a new Revelation. To have coerced men by any supernatural interference with their moral freedom, would, as you have already allowed in one of our former conversations have been alien to the glory of GOD'S moral government. But to teach, to warn, to attract, and to astonish them, by means of temporary interferences with the laws of nature, was an exercise of Omnipotence, which, while *evidential* of the truth externally, was also *formative* of it in their minds and consciences, without involving any derogation to the glory of GOD'S moral government over free and responsible agents. Upon this ground we hold that our Scripture miracles are credible.

RAM. Your argument seems to amount to this ; that, on the *supposition* of a special Revelation having been given to a chosen people, for the purpose of introducing a new creation of spiritual life in man in the midst of a world disorganised by sin, there would be a strong antecedent probability that God would do this through supernatural contrivances, which, by their very novelty and surprising interruptions of natural law, would startle them into attention, and lead them into belief. It appears to me, however, that your proof gets no further than supposition.

BISHOP. Excuse me. I am making no supposition whatever. The idea of a Revelation having been given to man is no speculation of mine. Such a Revelation has been received and believed in by millions of persons for thousands of years. That is a hard fact in the world's history, and is not mere imagination. Whether past ages were too credulous in this belief is another question. At any rate, it is a fair subject for investigation. Now in making this investigation we are faced by two separate lines of inquiry.

First, we have sacred books set before us containing laws and doctrines communicated professedly by divine power ; and secondly, for the evidence and confirmation of these, we have statements involving the Supernatural which, in the present day, and judged of only by our own experience, are hard to be believed. These, I say, are two distinct subjects of inquiry. And it is clear that they are mutually dependent one upon the other. For if the contents of the Revelation, apart from its alleged supernatural evidences, should be inherently irreconcilable with human reason and conscience, no amount of argument could satisfy us that its miraculous attestations were any thing better than myths and delusions. On the other hand, if it could be antecedently shewn that all miraculous or supernatural attestations are in their very nature, *impossible* ; then, however good the teaching of this professed Revelation may be, it must become evident that it is not really divine, otherwise it could not be so constructively interwoven with supernatural impossibilities. It is on this latter question that I have been speaking. I have not been so foolish as to attempt any *proof* of the truth of our scripture miracles ; but only to shew, by an argument from the admittedly Supernatural during one form of creation, that it would be neither impossible nor improbable, but, on the contrary, quite reasonable, to expect some repetition of the Supernatural during the foundation of another and a higher form of creation. But this, of itself, I am free to admit, would go for nothing, if you could shew that the *contents* of the alleged Revelation were essentially incredible.

RAM. I should have thought that if a real Revelation of divine truth had been given by God, it would have been too transparently self evident to require any supernatural attestation.

BISHOP. To the carnal and degenerate minds of men in those days, the purity and sublimity of Revelation had few attractions. We have now been elevated to a platform of enlightenment which makes us practically unconscious of the darkened and hardened condition of the world then existing, when attention only could be roused to the messages of GOD from heaven by means of "mighty signs and wonders."

RAM. I meet you then, on the other side of your question ;

and argue that all such alleged signs and wonders must have been false, on account of the incompatibility which exists between the contents of your Revelation and the rights of human reason and conscience. It is true that you have quieted some of my doubts ; but there are still some parts of your Revelation so utterly revolting to my own sense of the divine goodness and justice, that no amount of alleged miracle, however otherwise possible could reasonably attest it.

BISHOP. Then, let the issue of this day's inquiry be postponed. On some other occasion I will endeavour to meet your further objections to our Revelation. We shall see at last, how the balance will lie between us.

DIALOGUE VI.

RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES HOW A MERCIFUL GOD COULD HAVE
DEMANDED THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD FOR THE PROPITIATION
OF SIN.

RAMCHANDRA. You will not be surprised, my lord, if after our last interview, I return to you again with my doubts and difficulties about the truth of your alleged Revelation.

BISHOP. I would, by no means, have you untrue to your convictions. Indeed, I should entertain a very poor opinion of your earnestness, if, after what you told me the last time when we met, you did not come for further inquiry.

RAM. I am glad you meet me in that spirit. The question I now have upon my mind is one of very serious import. It affects the very nature and being of a God of mercy and love.

BISHOP. To what do you refer?

RAM. I refer to the moral incompatibility of a God of mercy demanding the bloodshedding of animal sacrifices for the propitiation of sins.

BISHOP. Is it your opinion that, when GOD ordained the institution of sacrifices for the remission of sins, it arose from a certain degree of implacability in His character which could only be satisfied or pacified by a thirst for blood?

RAM. I am at a loss to know what else it could possibly have been.

BISHOP. There is no warrant in our Revelation for any such sentiment.

RAM. You astonish me. I have always thought this idea was the only representation of the old Jewish ritual. At any rate, if this demand for bloodshedding of animals did not denote implacability, you must candidly allow that it was very harsh and cruel.

BISHOP. As for cruelty, I suppose that, if it were logically considered, it could have been no more cruel to shed the blood of animals on an altar. than in a butcher's shambles as preparatory for human food ; since the priests generally partook of those sacrifices for food afterwards.

RAM. Yes. But the offensive part of the practice consisted in this, that the blood thus shed was poured out upon the altar as a "*propitiation for sin*," in order to appease an angry Deity who refused pardon to the guilty sinner in any other way. What pleasure or satisfaction could an infinitely loving God receive from such a method of atonement ?

BISHOP. Where do you find it stated in our Scriptures that GOD took delight in this outpouring or shedding of blood for its own sake ?

RAM. Then why was it ordained ?

BISHOP. That is quite another question, which we will come to presently. Meanwhile, let me quote you certain passages which state the very reverse of what you now say. First, take the words of Samuel, when he rebuked king Saul on account of his having reserved the cattle of the conquered Amalekites for sacrifice, notwithstanding that he had been commanded to destroy them. "*Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*"* You will observe that, in this passage, the principle of moral obedience is placed far above that of ceremonial ; so much so, that "*burnt offerings and sacrifices*," are said to give GOD no delight or satisfaction as things considered merely in themselves. There is, consequently, in this passage a total absence of that spirit of vindictiveness or implacability, which you seem to think so inseparably connected with a demand for blood-shedding. Take, in the next place, a passage from the 40th Psalm. v. 6.—"*Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire ; burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required.*" What could David have

* 1. Sam. xv. 22.

intended by these words ? He could not possibly have meant to say that such sacrifices had not been divinely appointed ; or that they were not required for legal obedience. But rather that they were not ordained as acts which *in themselves* pleased GOD ; and which, apart from the higher principles of moral obedience, yielded Him any satisfaction. Accordingly in the 50th Psalm we find the following words :—“ *Hear O my people, and I will speak I will take no bullock out of thine house ; nor he goat out of thy folds : for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.*” *Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows to the Most High.*” Is not this a picture of exactly the same sort ? The Lord is looking upon the world in this Psalm as if He were about to come to it in judgement ; and He expresses that state of the Church which will give Him the greatest satisfaction. Now what is it ? Not the offering of “ *sacrifice* ;” but of “ *thanksgiving* ” and “ *moral obedience* ” ! Let me ask whether such language can consist with the possibility of its having proceeded from an implacable Deity who was thirsting for vengeance, and for blood ? On the contrary, it would seem as if He had chosen terms in order to express the very reverse. Listen again, to David’s estimate of the divine character in the next Psalm. “ *Thou desirest not sacrifice ; else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise.*” In other words, the conception of a God who delighted in blood for the purpose of satisfying any natural vindictiveness found no place in the Psalmist’s mind. Regarding sacrifice as a ceremonial expression of moral feeling, he assigns to the ceremonial a subordinate position ; and he gives preeminence only to that which was moral. If it were not for the fear of wearying you, I could add to these proofs of our doctrine.

RAM. Pray continue ; for I am no less interested than astonished.

BISHOP. Well ; here is another passage, taken from one of the Jewish prophets. “ *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offer-*

*ings of rams and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he goats.** Do you not again observe the same divine repudiation of any delight or of satisfaction in the mere outpouring of animal blood ? So in the words of another prophet. “ *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?*”† I leave you after this to decide for yourself, whether, in ordaining animal sacrifices, GOD did so because the act of blood-shedding, could alone appease His anger against sin. The testimony of our Scriptures is all the other way. While such sacrifices stood connected in a certain manner with atonement, you see they never yielded GOD any satisfaction in themselves. Nay, apart from moral obedience, and from spiritual penitence they were actually displeasing to Him.

RAM. These passages throw a new light upon your Bible, and to a great extent satisfy my inward moral sense. Notwithstanding all you have said, however, I still feel a difficulty when remembering how often it is written of the altar offerings ;—“ *God smelled a sweet savour.*” Did not an expression like that indicate sincere pleasure and satisfaction with them ?

BISHOP. But the evidence, just adduced ought to be quite enough to prove, that it was neither pleasure derived from the mere act of blood-shedding, nor satisfaction drawn from the pain and suffering of victims.

RAM. Then how do you explain the words ?

BISHOP. In the most natural manner possible. Because those sacrifices, when rightly offered, exhibited an obedience of faith which was moral as much as ceremonial ; the fact being, that sacrifices were instituted for great moral purposes, to which their

* Is. i. 11.

† Mic. vi. 6-8.

ceremonial only played a subordinate and pictorial or symbolical part.

RAM. Will you kindly explain to me what those great moral purposes were. For I am deeply interested ; and believe that a good solution of the matter would do much to clear away my difficulties.

BISHOP. You must commence, then, by putting away from your mind all idea of its having been any part of the divine intention to demand atonement for sin through pleasure and satisfaction in the death and suffering of animal victims.

RAM. I am only too glad to cast away any such horrible idea.

BISHOP. Perhaps you will ask me how it came to pass that, when GOD had no real pleasure in all this blood-shedding of victims, He could ever have instituted an ordinance so painful and so revolting. Does not that thought now occur to you ?

RAM. Therein lies one of those great moral difficulties which have hitherto prevented me from accepting your Old Testament Revelation. I have always looked upon the institution of sacrifices as a proof of cruelty, vindictiveness, and implacability ; and I am, therefore, naturally now longing to hear how you can otherwise possibly account for it.

BISHOP. I have already stated that this institution was intended to be a ceremonial, pictorial, or symbolical expression of deep moral truths ; and that apart from a believer's realization of those truths no atonement could be applied for the remission of sins. The offerings themselves were but an *outward and visible* token, on the sinner's part, of his own *inward assent* to these great moral truths ; by the presentation of which, he was put into a position of acceptance before GOD, and received the benefit of atonement.

RAM. How could that be ?

BISHOP. You will never be able to understand it, unless you continually bear in mind the necessity of faith on the part of the worshipper ; and which, even at the risk of being wearisome, I must once more impress upon you. The Hebrew ritual was not intended to be a dry bundle of ceremonials ; but a practical and powerful portrait of those spiritual truths which have ever constituted the reality of revealed religion.

RAM. Without further preface, therefore, tell me what these moral truths were. If they were adequately represented, I will allow you to have adduced a sufficient moral ground for the institution of sacrifices. If not, I must still regard it as a cruel and vindictive appointment, and unworthy of a God of mercy.

BISHOP. There were *five* of these, every one of which was essential to a valid offering for atonement. *1st.* These sacrifices shewed, (under an outward figure) that GOD, being infinitely holy and pure, could receive no worship from man unless it exhibited an entire consecration of the heart and life to His service, without the least taint of imperfection.

RAM. How so ?

BISHOP. Because the animals slain were all required to be "*without spot or blemish.*" In bringing such, therefore, to be offered, the worshipper was expected to acknowledge in his heart that nothing less than a perfectly sincere and sinless offering of prayer and praise could please GOD. Thus it was a symbolical act of homage rendered to Him as to a Being who was perfectly pure and holy.

RAM. Be so good as to proceed to your next point.

BISHOP. *2ndly.* These sacrifices involved a practical confession, on the part of the worshipper, that he had no righteousness of his own to present acceptably before GOD. They, consequently, involved, or were intended to involve, an humble and repentant acknowledgement of personal guilt.

RAM. I can quite concede both of these points as worthy of pictorial, or ceremonial symbolism. Will you continue your observations ?

BISHOP. *3rdly.* These sacrifices were also meant to involve, on the part of the worshipper, a full consent to the rectitude and justice of GOD in demanding the death of sinners. I dare say you will remember that, when an Israelite brought his offering to the altar, he was required to "*lay his hand upon the head*" of the animal slain for him. That was to shew, symbolically, how he deserved the same death himself in consequence of his own sins.

RAM. This, too, I can easily allow. But you have not yet touched the pith of my difficulties.

BISHOP. Perhaps I shall do so better, when I have advanced a step or two further.

RAM. Forgive my interruption.

BISHOP. *4thly.* These sacrifices were intended to exhibit the abominable malignity of sin.

RAM. How so?

BISHOP. Nothing could have well been a greater ceremonial expression of the malignity of sin; nor could anything have been better devised to set forth an humbling and sorrowful acknowledgment of it. For, consider what it involved. Here were pain, bloodshedding, and death, not inflicted on the being who was guilty, but on an innocent creature which had done no wrong at all! How horribly malignant and abominable, then, must sin have been felt, when its effects were thus set forth as making the innocent to suffer for the guilty; and as openly perverting the first principles of justice and morality?

RAM. But if God Himself thus appointed the innocent to suffer for the guilty, how do you escape from the dilemma that He also was unjust?

BISHOP. You might, perhaps make that impeachment, if you had any right to say that GOD enjoined this bloodshedding, in order to gratify and please Himself. Of that idea, however, I have already shewn you the falsehood from our own Scriptures. No! His object was strictly a moral one; *viz.*, to exhibit, under the rights of His sovereignty over creation, by such a ceremony, how sin was producing in the world nothing but pain, misery, and injustice. For, explain it how you like, it is an actual matter of fact, that the innocent *are* every day suffering through the sins of others. Are not guiltless children often made miserable by disease and poverty; while their wicked parents spend their day in riotous living? Are not God-fearing women continually illtreated by their brutal husbands? When banking houses fail are not thousands of depositors and shareholders ruined, through the cupidity and roguery of unscrupulous directors? And, when other great crimes are committed against society, and the culprits are publicly tried and condemned, do they not bequeath the shame and degradation of their crimes to their unhappy families? What

are these cases, but acts whereby sin makes the innocent to suffer for the guilty ?

RAM. Yes, but these acts are committed by men one against the other. They are not the direct appointment of God.

BISHOP. True ; and, therefore, the law of sacrifice was expressly appointed by GOD in order to express symbolically the malignant results of these acts in His sight. It was not designed, as I have told you, to please Himself ; but to appeal to the moral sense of man, as a lesson on the hatefulness of evil. It was intended to set forth sin as a curse which had brought in death ; which was ruining all things ; which was turning the whole world into a place of weeping, and groaning ; and which was overthrowing the very first principles of right and wrong. How, I ask, could any institution have been better adapted to portray this, than the sight of innocent victims being thus made to bleed and die, as the direct result of human guilt, though in themselves they did not deserve it ? The very tendency it has to make you revolt from it is a proof of the truth of what I say. The Lord appointed it for that every purpose. Therein, indeed, lay its deep moral teaching ; painful teaching, I allow,—yet expressly *meant* to be painful, in order that the curse of evil might ever remain present. An Israelite who brought his victim to be slain, learned by this act, that his sin was utterly abominable ; that, in the very existence of human guilt, there lay a curse which was overthrowing the first principles of right and wrong, which was destroying the innocent, and converting the world into a camp of misery and death. Was not symbolical teaching like this worthy of a Holy GOD ?

RAM. I am greatly indebted to you for these remarks. Such a helpful view of the subject was never before offered to me. Yet even this has not reached the main point upon which I desire information. I want to know what the method was, by which the offering of such sacrifices could possibly constitute any real atonement for man's sin.

BISHOP. We are gradually coming to it. What, however, do you mean by atonement ? The etymology, of the word may be sufficient to explain it ; *viz.*, the reconciliation of man to GOD by both

being made "*at one*." In other words, it is something, on account of which GOD not only consents that guilty man should be at peace with Him, and enjoy His favour; but on account of which He would also treat man as pardoned of all his transgressions.

RAM. Granting your definition, I wish to know in what manner the sacrifice of innocent animals could ever bring about such results. The arrangement appears inconsequential; having no congruity, or moral fitness in it for such purposes.

BISHOP. You are partially correct. These animal sacrifices, considered as things in themselves, possessed no moral fitness for effecting any true Atonement. Scripture itself teaches us this. Our Apostle Paul says,—"*It was not possible for the blood of bullocks, or of goats to take away sins.*"* When GOD, therefore, promised that such offerings should be accepted for Atonement, it must be obvious that He appointed them only in a ceremonial, and symbolical manner. They must have represented something of a moral nature which was to come afterwards; something which would supply the worshippers with a real and true reconciliation to Himself, and of which these altar sacrifices were but a type or pattern. On their part reconciliation was indeed, *actually* received for the time being, through the faith with which they obeyed the appointment, trusting to some more perfect form of Redemption to come afterwards, and by virtue of which the blessing was graciously antedated. On GOD's part, reconciliation was bestowed by virtue of that which lay within His hidden purposes of mercy, and of which these appointments were but signs.

RAM. If these sacrifices formed the signs or types of a really effective atonement which was to come afterwards; and which should settle the transaction on a reasonable and moral basis, will you have the kindness to inform me what was the thing signified.

BISHOP. That brings me to the last and great truth propounded by the institution of altar sacrifices. I answer, *5thly*. These sacrifices were intended to teach every Jewish worshipper that, in view of the wide spread miseries and curses produced throughout the world by sin, there would, one day, come among them

* Heb. x. 4.

that long promised Redeemer, "*The Seed of the woman*," who should exhibit all the truths which I have explained to you as lying clustered around their altars; not ceremonially, however, but morally; *One* who by the triumph of human righteousness, both in life and death, should obtain such victory over the curse as would restore our nature, in His own Person, to the favour and acceptance of heaven, and fitly constitute Him a Mediator and Saviour for the whole world.

RAM. By this course of reasoning you only shift the difficulty from the Old to the New Testament.

BISHOP. Say so, if you please. But at any rate you must allow that your idea of cruelty and vindictiveness on the part of God, in having ordained the Old Testament system of sacrifices, has been removed; and, equally that a rationale has been found for their divine appointment.

RAM. Say, rather, that the same idea of injustice and vindictiveness still exists; only that it is now transferred from the Law to the Gospel. With your lordship's permission, we will enter upon that subject at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE VII.

RAMCHANDRA NOW INQUIRES INTO THE DOCTRINE OF PROPITIATION FOR SIN THROUGH THE DEATH AND SUFFERINGS OF A REDEEMER.

RAMCHANDRA. This will be a critical day, my lord,—as far as I and my belief in Christianity are concerned. Words cannot express the earnestness with which I come to you.

BISHOP. I have myself equal anxiety. For, while I wish to set before you the Gospel of the world's reconciliation to GOD through Christ in the open light of reason, I nevertheless, cannot rationalise divine Revelation for the sake of making you a convert. After all, faith, and reason cannot be dissevered: for they are twin sisters.

RAM. What do you mean?

BISHOP. I mean that, within her own limits, faith is bound to be reasonable; and no less, that reason, within her limits, is bound to be believing. Is not this the case in science? Think, for example, of the mathematical relationship of an asymptote to the curve of the hyperbola. You may, perhaps, remember that it is a straight line which goes on *ad infinitum*, drawing nearer and nearer to the curve, yet never intersecting it! "Impossible," we exclaim. "I will never believe so preposterous a statement." Reason, however, replies, "It is accurately demonstrated; and no one can disprove the statement." What follows? Why, in this case, *faith* is obliged to yield. And when she does so, within her own limits, she becomes *reasonable*. On the other hand, reason, exclaims, "I cannot disprove the result; yet I am unable to grasp the conception, and it seems too much of a paradox to believe." Faith however, here replies: "Why should you doubt, because you can-

not fully understand ? It is incomprehensible. Nevertheless if it be truth, you are bound to believe." What follows ? Why, in that case, as before, the victory is gained. *Reason* also yields ; and so, within her limits, *becomes believing*.

RAM. I do not see what all this has to do with the subject.

BISHOP. Nothing more than as proving what I just now remarked, that reason and faith are twin sisters. They are both based upon mental intelligence ; and ought mutually to aid each other in the pursuit of truth. It is the same in religion as in philosophy.

RAM. The illustration is adroit ; but it does not satisfy me. I want to know why we are not at liberty to believe that God has power to forgive sins without the intervention of Atonement ?

BISHOP. Whether GOD could, by any possibility have granted pardon for sin without having first demanded some vindication of the righteousness of His broken Law, is a question which we have no means of absolutely determining. Revelation only tells us that He both required, and provided this. All that we have, therefore, now to settle is, whether such a provision falls within the limits of reasonable credence. It is just at this point, let me add, where the twin sistership of reason and faith begins to exhibit itself.

RAM. That depends upon the methods by which your Revelation describes this provision for effecting the pardon of sin. There is certainly no such thing, under human law, as any remission of moral guilt through satisfaction rendered by another person.

BISHOP. Analogy between the nature of human and divine law must be necessarily imperfect. For, under breaches of *human* law, satisfaction can be alone claimed for particular offences. Society at large does not constitute a law breaking mass. Offences therefore being exceptional, the law requires only exceptional vindications of its honour. In the case of *divine* law, however, it is very different. For the moral breach between man and his Maker is universal. In the language of our Scriptures, "*Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.*"*

* Rom. iii. 19.

You know that, under human law, there is no possibility of transgression except by overt acts of disobedience; whereas, under divine law, transgression is reckoned in matters even of thought and feeling. Human law can take no cognizance of impure desires, avaricious covetings, or secret hatreds. It can only claim reparation or satisfaction, when these feelings break into open crime. But divine law addresses itself to the heart and conscience; requiring "*truth in the inward parts*," purity in every motive, obedience in every desire, rectitude in every word, love in all our actions. The dishonour done to it, therefore, is not personal and exceptional, but general and fundamental; it does not result from separate, and isolated acts of disobedience, so much as from the radical generic corruption of our entire manhood. You will, consequently, see that, where transgressions are so widely different, all analogy between satisfaction demanded by these laws, for the purpose of vindicating their insulted majesty, must needs be very imperfect.

RAM. In what way?

BISHOP. In this way. Transgressions of *human* law are like rotten branches upon a tree. While the rest of the tree is healthy, its root is sound. Transgressions of *divine* Law, on the other hand, are like the branches of a tree rotten and unsound throughout; because the root itself is decayed. In the first case, the tree is only spoiled in part, and needs but partial treatment; whereas, in the second case, the tree is organically injured; and needs entire regeneration. If these were, therefore, both favourite trees of one owner, about the honour and beauty of which he was specially jealous, is it not evident that the injury of the one tree could be repaired much more easily than that of the other?

RAM. Certainly.

BISHOP. And is it not equally clear that the method of reparation would have to be very different?

RAM. True.

BISHOP. Well! Exactly so must it be in reference to the vindicated honour of human and divine law. The cases are entirely different. The transgressions against *divine* law being universal and the dishonour done to it extending from the very root of

manhood to it utmost branches, that law demands a greater vindication of insulted majesty than mere *human* law.

RAM. Explain the difference.

BISHOP. Under *human* law, the infliction of penalty (either by fine or imprisonment or death) is always deemed sufficient satisfaction; inasmuch as offences, being merely exceptional, the law is otherwise duly honoured through the obedience of a multitude of ordinary well doers. Under *divine* law, however, this method of satisfaction is utterly insufficient. For, sin being universal, there is no reserve of general obedience which can otherwise sustain the necessary honour of law. Any infliction of penalty, even upon the whole mass of mankind, would still leave divine government without the slightest exhibition of rightful human obedience. Hence, before the insulted majesty of GOD's law could be fully repaired, manhood had, in some form or other, to yield *moral*, as well as *penal* satisfaction. But for this purpose a new representative Root of manhood was required. For the old root being decayed and corrupt, how could it present manhood before GOD with moral obedience. It is under considerations such as these, that we begin to see the reasonableness of Christianity in revealing to us a New Incarnation of manhood; the uprising, that is to say, of a new root in the human race, partaking, like ourselves, of flesh and blood, and subject to all our infirmities, yet without sin. Such a Being, we believe, did arise as a new Representative Head of Humanity; who by His sinless life, made a complete resettlement of manhood's moral obedience, and that, under the same conditions of probation as had been proposed to man at first. Hence, in Him, manhood once more became the subject of Divine complacency; and through Him the righteousness of GOD's Law was again glorified in our own nature.

RAM. Do you, then, believe in the supernatural uprising of a sinless man, who, by his personal victory over moral evil, so obeyed the Law as to effect the moral settlement of our own indebtedness to its commandments? If that be your faith, I altogether deny its reasonableness. For it is repugnant to all our natural intuitions that the moral worth of one man, however good, should be substituted by law for the want of moral worth in another.

BISHOP. It will be time enough to argue that point when I take up such a position. I said nothing of the kind. Nor did I mean it. What I said was, that, by the victory of human nature over evil in the Person of One who had been born of our own race, and who held the very substance of our manhood, GOD was enabled, consistently with His own glory, to recognise once more a glorification of His Law; and so to behold Manhood, in the *Person* of that Redeemer, with recovered complacency.

RAM. I grant it, so far as the person whom you describe would be individually concerned. But what effect could that have upon mankind, in general, unless you believe that the moral obedience of this Redeemer was substituted, under divine law, in place of our own obedience?

BISHOP. Any thought of this Redeemer's righteousness as having been *legally* substituted in the way of payment for our own obedience, would be a monstrous fiction. The settlement of *legal* righteousness by our Redeemer was strictly *Personal*. Our own right to, and interest in it, have nothing to do with law. It is simply a matter of *Grace*. But there is this connection between them, that Grace could not act till the law had been duly honoured and fulfilled by *our own* manhood. When, therefore, this had been done by the Redeemer, (who was as much a man as any one of ourselves,) it became consistent with the holiness of GOD's moral government to exercise grace towards the rest of men for the Redeemer's sake.

RAM. You mean to say, I suppose, that God still regards all men as sinners; but that inasmuch as the holiness of His law has been vindicated by the perfect obedience of this Representative of humanity, He is in a position to shew grace and mercy, without doing violence to the perfection of His own attributes. Viewed perhaps in this manner, there is nothing unreasonable in the idea. At all events I am willing for the present to concede that this may be a fair starting point for your theory of Redemption.

BISHOP. In other words you allow that as the consequence of man's first *disobedience* was general condemnation, the consequence of CHRIST's *obedience* may have provided a legitimate opening for Mercy.

RAM. I will allow it, on the grounds stated, as a not unreasonable supposition but I fail altogether to see how it bears upon the doctrine of Atonement which was the special object of this interview.

BISHOP. It not only lays a moral foundation for that doctrine ; but it is a key to one feature in those animal sacrifices, under the law of Moses, which we were lately discussing. Do you not remember that all those victims were required to be, "*without spot or blemish* ?" Nothing typically imperfect or impure could be regarded as a payment of penalty due to the broken law of GOD's holiness. It was therefore in strict consistence with this, that, before our Redeemer could personally pay the penalty due to that Law, He should first exhibit manhood in Himself as perfectly pure and unblemished.

RAM. Now we are coming to the kernel of the whole question. And here I have most serious difficulties.

BISHOP. Be kind enough to name them.

RAM. I wish to know how you can explain the doctrine of atonement as having what you call, a *moral* foundation, when it consigned to death a life which, on your own shewing, was blameless ; and which therefore, deserved no such punishment. What morality could there have been in such an overthrow of all the right ends of justice ?

BISHOP. You overlook the inevitable necessity of death to every mortal body. When an infant dies, whom you cannot but regard as personally blameness, it does so, not on account of any evil which it has committed, but simply because of that sequence in the order of nature, which rules the necessary decease of every one possessing mortality. In a somewhat similar manner, when the Incarnation of CHRIST took place, although His manhood was from the first without any moral infection, it was, nevertheless, clothed in a body which carried within it, all the physical consequences of mortality. He wept, and groaned, and fainted. He had in Himself all the germs of decay. If He died at last, therefore, under the pressure of this physical weakness, it was the inevitable result of His attachment to our mortal manhood, it was a necessary sequence taking place in the order of

human nature which is to be viewed as natural law, quite apart from the question of moral merit.

RAM. That would be an excellent argument, if it were not invalidated by the testimony of your own Scripture, which tells of two striking exceptions to this general law of necessary mortality, I refer to Enoch and Elijah. If I am to believe that these two men were delivered from death, although possessing mortal bodies, why should not your Redeemer have had deliverance, when, according to your own faith, He was much more meritorious, and might even, on His own merits have claimed it?

BISHOP. I admit the logic of your reasoning; and compliment you on your acuteness. You mean to say that, when we believe in these two exceptions to general law, we may be fairly called upon to shew some special reason why, in the case of the Redeemer's holier, and still more glorious life, the same exception should not have been made.

RAM. That is precisely what I desire to have explained.

BISHOP. Do you not think the conquest of our Redeemer's righteousness over moral evil was more abundantly seen by His Resurrection from the grave, and His consequent victory over death itself, than it would have been, if He had simply gained personal deliverance from the tomb by translation into heaven? For if He had ascended into Glory, without a passage through death, the grave would still have boasted that mortal manhood had never burst its gates. And thus, in spite of manhood's moral victory over evil, death could still have claimed the dominion of penalty over us. But when the victorious Redeemer entered the grave in His completed righteousness, death having no power to detain Him as a lawful captive, He broke its curse by claiming victory over it in a new and glorified humanity; and rose a much greater conqueror than He could possibly have done, had He escaped from it altogether by a living translation into heaven.

RAM. I am not a Christian, and therefore cannot be expected to believe these statements which you are now assuming to be facts; nevertheless I am bound to acknowledge that, on the basis of your own belief, you have theoretically set forth the matter reasonably. Nor is your case, so far stated, without a certain

amount of philosophical symmetry which pleases me. But as regards the doctrine of Christ's "*propitiation for sin*" you must excuse me for saying, that you are, all this while, fencing the true question by a number of surrounding considerations which have little bearing upon the main topic of our present interview.

BISHOP. Bring me, then, closer to the point, in any way you desire.

RAM. Your Scriptures represent the death of the Redeemer as much more than a mere historical antecedent to, and preparation for, His conquest of the grave. If that had been all, your Gospel would not be so distasteful to me. My reason would not rise up in rebellion against it. But your case is, at present, only half stated. For was not the payment of Christ's obedience to God's broken law *penal*, as well as *moral*? It is on this part of the subject that I wish for more light.

BISHOP. The penal and moral part of CHRIST'S obedience can never be separated from one another by any hard and fast line of distinction. For, on the *one* hand, even His moral obedience was, throughout, mingled with penalty. Did He not walk through life as the "*man of sorrows*"? Was He not "*despised and rejected of men*"? Had He not to bear the contradiction of sinners? Were not His words and actions perpetually misinterpreted and calumniated? Must you not allow that His whole career of love and gentleness, of purity and faithfulness, was surrounded by an atmosphere of mental and moral suffering? Long before death came upon Him, He had to bear the penalty of living in a sin-stricken world, and of being followed by its hatred and malice, its scorn and persecution. On the *other* hand, even in His penal obedience to the Law, there was equally an exhibition of moral satisfaction; without which, indeed, His death would have been utterly worthless. For, consider His meekness under scourging; His patience under unmerited mockery; His love towards His enemies and tormentors, His willing submission to them without a word of anger or murmuring, in the midst of every possible pain and indignity which they could inflict upon Him. What was this but the highest form of moral obedi-

ence? What was all this, but to make the triumph of human righteousness over evil as perfect as might be possible? In fact, how could any *full* exhibition of conquest over sin and temptation have been possibly achieved, unless the battle of the Redeemer had thus been fought to the bitter end? Otherwise, it had been right for the voice of GOD's broken Law to say,—“The victory of human righteousness is still incomplete. It has not yet shewn its triumph over the sorrows, and pains, and penalties of death.” But now that allegation is impossible. All these last forms of trial and temptation have been perfectly endured and vanquished. The violated law of GOD can, therefore, demand no further satisfaction; because, in the manhood of this Redeemer, alike through life and through death, human righteousness is as finished and completed as it possibly could have been.

RAM. If I could only believe in the actual reality of this supernatural Incarnation of manhood, with its moral conquest over evil, through the passage both of life and death (as you have now explained it), together with its resurrection from the dead, and its acceptance before God as a new representative root of our nature, I should not accuse Christianity of any theoretical unreasonableness. But I am satisfied that, like a skilful debater, you have not set the whole case before me. You have presented me with its not unreasonable front, for the purpose of ingratiating your faith into my mind; while you have been careful to keep back that part of the subject which you know will most excite my antipathy.

BISHOP. That remark is scarcely courteous.

RAM. Pardon me. But hitherto you have chiefly represented the atonement in its moral aspect. You cannot deny however that its penal character has also a *separate* and *distinct* existence. Else, what is meant by “*propitiation for sin through the blood of Christ*”? What is meant by its being said that, “*He bore our sins*”? That, “*He died, the just for the unjust*”? And that He “*made peace with God through His blood*”? Out of these, and similar expressions in your Scriptures, which you have hitherto avoided, I have several questions to ask you which I think you will find it difficult to answer.

BISHOP You can put forth no difficulties upon this subject which I have not felt myself ; I am, therefore, quite ready to reply to any thing you may ask.

RAM. As I told you at the outset, my difficulties are not captious. I am really a sincere inquirer. I shall, therefore, say nothing which is not founded upon honest and conscientious doubt.

BISHOP. I shall be all the better pleased to listen.

RAM. Tell me, then, in the *first* place, how a God who is unchangeable can so be altered by the shedding of a Redeemer's blood for sin, that, whereas, before the act, He was angry, He afterwards became changed into a disposition of love and mercy ? I can only see in this doctrine of reconciliation through atonement, a character of changeableness which is inconsistent with any just conception of an eternal and immutable Being.

BISHOP. You entirely mistake the case. No change was made by atonement in GOD'S character or feeling towards sinners. It was not His character which changed, but only His relationship towards us as a moral Governor. In character, GOD was, even before the death of CHRIST, exactly what He is now, a Being full of infinite love and mercy. Indeed, it was this very feature of His unchanging nature which provided the Atonement for man. It is written : "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" If He had not been eternal and immutable in His mercy the doctrine of reconciliation would never have been heard of. Do not say, therefore, that the Cross of CHRIST altered the moral disposition of GOD towards mankind in the slightest degree. He was always full of love towards us even in the depths of our moral ruin ; ever angered against sin, but no less pitiful toward the sinner. I repeat my statement, that it was only His relationship towards us as our moral Governor which became altered through this great act of reconciliation. It was not a variation in moral feeling, but a changed aspect of legal righteousness.

RAM. You appear to make God a mere creature of law.

BISHOP. Not the creature of law, but rather its Creator and fountain head. All law is, primarily, the embodiment of divine

righteousness, the relationship of which to man must always be determined according to his obedience or disobedience; GOD Himself, meanwhile, remaining absolutely immutable. Thus, so long as human nature continued spotless, the legal relationship of GOD's righteousness to it was one of amity and concord. But when human nature was corrupted, that relationship necessarily became one of alienation and separation. Hence the "*reconciliation*" of GOD to man is an expression which is far from implying any change in GOD Himself; but merely that change in His legal relationship towards us which enables Him now to put away the judgement of His offended law and to offer us terms of peace; terms which, while perfectly new, are rendered consistent with His moral attributes and eternal Glory.

RAM. You have replied to my first question with greater success than I anticipated, and, what is more, you have placed the matter on a basis which I cannot controvert as illogical. Nevertheless, it does but lead to another difficulty. I should like to know, in the *second* place, upon what principle the atonement of Christ, viewed as a propitiation for sin, had power to effect this alteration which you have described in the relationship of GOD's moral government over mankind. Your own Scriptures put it down to His having, "*borne our sins*," which means receiving the penalty of judgement in place of ourselves. Now how can this reasonably effect the relationship of GOD's righteousness to man? If when I were about to flog one of my disobedient boys, a good natured brother were to say to me, "Father, let him go, and flog me instead." Do you suppose, that, by doing so, I could reasonably think the guilt had been transferred from one boy to the other; and that, by laying the punishment on innocent shoulders, I had reasonably satisfied the true righteousness of law?

BISHOP. Certainly not, nor is your illustration parallel with the case of our Redeemer's propitiatory suffering for the sin of mankind. Scripture nowhere speaks of the personal transfer of actual guilt to CHRIST. Certain theologians have sometimes done so, I allow; and have thereby opened a door to infidelity. But, not only is such an idea contrary to all legal righteousness; it is, as I have just said, totally unsanctioned by any words of Revelation.

RAM. You astonish me. I always looked upon that as the very essence of the doctrine of atonement.

BISHOP. I am very glad to astonish you ; for it may possibly lead you to reconsider the subject.

RAM. I am still at a loss to know your meaning. For if human guilt was not transferred to Christ, on what ground did He die for sinners ?

BISHOP. Guilt cannot be transferred to an innocent being. A man may suffer under false accusation, and be punished by an unjust law, on the assumption that he is guilty. But, if innocent, the guilt cannot morally be transferred to him. The idea is a mere fiction, an utter impossibility.

RAM. Yet guilt is only another word for sin. Hence, if Christ, according to your faith, "*bore your sins*," He surely must have borne your guilt. You appear to me to involve yourself in a contradiction.

BISHOP. Is there not a clear distinction between a fact, and its *consequences* ? CHRIST bore the *consequences* of human guilt ; or, if you like, the *curse* of man's sin ; but as for any legal transfer of sin itself impeaching His own pure spirit before GOD, that would have been a moral impossibility. Doubtless our sins must have grieved His holy manhood, when He wept, and groaned, and agonized in Gethsemane over their ingratitude and malignity. Had they not constituted a revolt against the law of GOD which He loved ? Suffering, therefore, as He did, under their last imposed curse in death, must not the nearness of their contaminating influences have pressed upon His sensitive heart ? Condemned by false accusers, and treated in His last hours as a criminal, must not the sin of the world have shocked and wounded His moral sense with the most poignant anguish ? Yet all this was a transfer to Himself of the surrounding presence and horrible *consequences* of human guilt ; not of guilt itself. That was the way in which He "*bore our sins* ;" and in which "*the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all*."*

RAM. I see your distinction, and admit it. But it by no

* Isaiah liii. 6.

means gets rid of the difficulty. There still remains the fact that one man died for the sins of others ; and that, through His sufferings, the just penalty of God's broken law was removed from the proper offenders. How do you make that compatible with reason ? I suspect that, after all, my illustration of the innocent boy being flogged to release the disobedient boy from punishment was correct.

BISHOP. Excuse me, you are once more mistaken in your statement of the ease. The Atonement, or in other words, the "*propitiation of Christ for sin*," did not, of itself, remove the penalty of sin from the disobedient ; otherwise GOD would be bound to pardon the whole mass of mankind. For, where the penalty of the law is once remitted to a man, it can never justly be inflicted. Now CHRIST's propitiation was for the whole world. If then the whole world had had its penalty absolutely remitted, the whole world must be saved. In the case of your own illustration, for example, if you were really to flog your innocent boy, in order to release the disobedient one, you could not justly punish the fault afterwards. Believe me, this is not the Scriptural ground upon which our Redeemer is said to have died for sinners.

RAM. Then I know not what remains. You appear to me, to be explaining away point after point, and evading one difficulty after another, until at last your Scriptures will become unintelligible. For if by suffering the penalty of sin, the Redeemer did not remove that penalty, why did He bear it ?

BISHOP. He did most perfectly and absolutely remove it ; but not immediately from ourselves.

RAM. From whom, then, did He remove it ?

BISHOP. From the sight of GOD, as a necessary impediment to our salvation.

RAM. Your words are like a dark enigma.

BISHOP. I mean to say, that our Redeemer took this penalty legally out of GOD's sight ;—that, whereas, before this, the curse of the law lay as a moral impediment to any display of divine love towards sinners, a door of mercy was then opened which rendered the salvation of man compatible with the glory of Divine Government, inasmuch as the righteousness of the Law had been exhibited and fulfilled in a perfect manhood.

RAM. There is a philosophical basis in your religion which I did not expect to find, and which I shall ponder well in private. It strikes me, however, that, after all, there lies an impeachment of the goodness and justice of God. For, in the *next* place, by what law of justice could one so holy and innocent as your Redeemer ever have been made to bear the consequences of guilt which had no existence within Himself? Is it reasonable that divine anger against sin should have incarcerated a guiltless man within the penal settlement of this condemned world, and have found satisfaction in His sufferings? What inexorable and un pitying vengeance does this seem!

BISHOP. If Scripture taught us that any inexorable decree of GOD had *compelled* the Redeemer to enter the prison house of this world; if His life of holy sorrow, and His death of bitter penalty had been forced upon Him, in order that the malediction of Divine law against human guilt might be propitiated; then you might perhaps impeach the goodness and justice of the Almighty. But it was far otherwise. It was a mission coordinated between the infinite love of the Father, and of the Son, who, in voluntary pitifulness and mercy, came forth from the Father to save a fallen race. The act of the Redeemer was one of free self-surrender, and not only meant for the salvation of sinners, but for the glory of His Father also; in order that He might at once and for ever vindicate the righteousness of divine law and achieve the final supremacy of good over evil. Does this way of putting the case offend your reason? Why might not eternal and infinite love claim that indulgence? Have you never read of the self sacrificing missionary, who voluntarily entered a leper house, knowing that he must live and die there? No inexorable law compelled him. The spirit of love alone constrained him to say; "Let me enter the pest house, though I leave it not till I die. I will bear the burden of those sufferers, that I may teach and comfort them, and be their spiritual helper and saviour." In a similar manner it was no decree of law which forced the Redeemer to live and die among sinful men. It was free grace and voluntary love alone which said; "I will visit the race appointed to die; I will be clothed with its mortal body, and put myself under the curse

of death ; in order that, by living for their sakes, and by dying like one of themselves, though death will have no power to hold me, I may conquer death, and raise up a people to everlasting life," When we say, therefore, that our Redeemer "*died*" for us, as a "*sacrifice*," and that His "*blood*" is a "*propitiation for our sins*," we mean to say that, by thus dying for us, He voluntarily surrendered Himself to the violated Law of GOD for the triumph of human righteousness over all moral evil, and for its victory over the curse of death. We mean also that it was the willing endurance of incarnate love inheriting the allotted penalties of mortality, in order that sin might thereby be revealed in its most aggravated form, and be displayed before the universe under the greatest possible proof of its malignancy. For how could the curse attached to mortality be more malignantly exhibited, than when it took the life of this holy Being who had fulfilled all the requirements of GOD, only because He was tabernacled in the nature of condemned manhood ? What more could be done by this new representative Head of manhood, to illustrate the holiness and the unchangeableness of the divine law, both in the righteousness of its commandments, and in the severity of its prescribed penalty against mortal flesh ? What could the grave claim after such a life and death ? In Him "*mercy and truth*" had "*met together ; righteousness and peace*" had "*kissed each other*."* He rose, therefore, from the dead in a sanctified and glorified humanity, triumphant over the curse of the Law ; a victorious Redeemer, who had not only the right to heaven in His own human merits, but the right also to act as Mediator for His weaker brethren.

RAM. You have put the matter in a new light, when you represent Redemption as a voluntary and undemanded redress of love for the wrongs done to divine holiness by the sin of man ; and when you add that the penal suffering which attended it was meant to exhibit the malignity of sin, and the unchangeableness of divine law ; not being inflicted by way of vengeance, but rather as a vindication of eternal truth and righteousness ; not being

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

compelled in order to appease the divine anger, but provided rather by God's own free love, for the purpose of glorifying and perpetuating the stability of His moral government. Many Christians, however, are not content with this. They talk and write as if the atonement of Christ were a kind of commercial transaction, in which so much penalty and suffering were paid down for so much sin ; before the payment of which, divine vengeance could not be satisfied; and by means of which alone God could feel love enough to shew pardon toward sinners.

BISHOP. I am afraid you are only too correct in this remark. Yet, I hope you do not think Christianity is responsible for the mistakes of those who misunderstand it. The truth is, Scripture has never formulated the doctrine of Atonement under any philosophical statements. It speaks of GOD, rather, under the poetic and anthropomorphic form of One who possesses feelings of anger and wrath;—not to teach us that He really is a Being with parts and passions like ourselves; but simply for the purpose of describing the legal relationship of His moral government towards sinners. If, therefore, it portrays the Atonement as making "*peace and reconciliation*," for us, it merely means (speaking less metaphorically) that, while GOD Himself remained immutable, the relationship of His moral law to man became changed from that of judgement to mercy, and from that of alienation to peace. And when CHRIST is represented, out of the depths of His eternal and immutable love, as voluntarily "*offering Himself*" to be a "*propitiation for sin*," it is not meant that He was immolated on an altar of sacrifice to satisfy the implacable resentment of an angry Deity; but that He therein so completed submission to GOD's Law in our own nature, as from henceforth to render the entire administration of GOD's moral Government consistent with a scheme of pardoning grace for sinners, and at the same time to preserve the divine glory unviolated. When the Personal Love of CHRIST, therefore, has thus triumphed in the grandest achievement which the universe could possibly behold, let us not perplex our minds, with cold hearted reasoning, or metaphysical subtleties. Let us take this stupendous act of Redeeming grace just as we find it; and allow faith and reason, like twin sisters, to help each other in embracing it,

RAM. You have unquestionably done me good service. I am still far from being a Christian ; for, even assuming this doctrine to be within the limits of reasonable belief up to the point which we have now reached, there are still difficulties, which I need to have resolved, about its application to man, through what you have already adverted to,—I mean, the merits and the mediation of your Redeemer. We must enter into that part of the question however, on some other occasion. Meanwhile I shall certainly respect this doctrine of “propitiation for sin,” in a manner that I never could before ; and I heartily thank you for the conversation.

DIALOGUE VIII.

RAMCHANDRA INQUIRES INTO THE MEDIATION AND MERITS OF
CHRIST, AS APPLIED TO THE SALVATION OF MANKIND.

RAMCHANDRA. I come this morning to your lordship for renewed conversation. I am not a convert. Probably I never shall be. Yet I honestly confess that some of my strongest prejudices have been removed. At the same time there is still much obscurity in my mind.

BISHOP. Is it connected with our previous conversation ?

RAM. It is. I cannot understand how your Redeemer is able to plead His *own* merits on *our* behalf. It does not seem to me to be a suitable or reasonable method by which the sin of man can be forgiven. How can one person's goodness or innocence be applied to the case of guilty criminals, so as to secure their acquittal, and reinstate them in position and reputation ? If a well known citizen of virtue and probity, were to plead his personal merit on behalf of a condemned criminal, by what reasonable process could a just judge allow such a plea to liberate the culprit ?

BISHOP. You are both right and wrong. In the *first* place you are right. For, as a necessary and immutable exponent of GOD's moral government, all law must needs carry with it condemnation to the guilty. It can allow of no such fiction as the placing of one individual's merit to the credit of another. Yet in the *second* place, you are wrong. For the case you have proposed is not parallel to the subject under discussion. In your own illustration, the mediator is only a private individual, who has but fulfilled human law in his personal righteousness as a debt which he was bound to pay on his own account ; and which, therefore, can in no wise honour the law of GOD as a discharge for

any one else. Whereas, in the case of our Redeemer, we hold that, the violated Law of GOD has received reparation for its forfeited allegiance by means of a true and proper human righteousness;—not offered by a private individual who was bound to discharge it on His own account, but by One who, as our representative Head, has so gained victory over sin, and the curse of sin, that henceforth Manhood, in His Person, can be rightfully regarded by GOD with absolute complacence and satisfaction. In this way we believe that the infinite merits of CHRIST'S Manhood justify the holiness of GOD (for His SON'S sake) in making a *temporary suspension* of the penalties of Law, under a dispensation of proffered grace and mercy. We believe also that in consequence of the plenitude and universality of those merits, CHRIST has now the power of presenting them before the FATHER, as a plea upon which, for His own sake, He can intercede on our behalf. In other words, we do not as sinners partake of CHRIST'S merits *legally*. We are only permitted, *through grace* to enter into their *consequences*. The merits of CHRIST must eternally remain His own. Their benefits or consequences alone become transferred to ourselves.

RAM. That is not so unreasonable. For there are many instances, even among men, where others enter into benefits which they do not personally deserve, through the merits of intervening persons.

BISHOP. True. Do you remember in our Scriptures the history of David and Goliath? David, as the representative of Israel, fought Goliath, as the representative of the Philistines; and he overcame him. The result was, that the whole army of Israel gained peace. The merit, so to speak, was David's alone; yet his brethren entered into the consequences of it. In like manner, CHRIST as the Representative of manhood fought against the curse of the Law, as the representative of GOD'S offended government, and He overcame it. The result was, that we, whom He represented, gained the promise of peace; although we had no claim ourselves to any personal merit in the transaction. We had nothing to do with the victory; nevertheless we enter into its blessed results.

Again. Do you remember the narrative of David and Mephibosheth? David said. "*Is there any of the house of Saul to whom I may shew kindness for Jonathan's sake?*"* Upon which, out of love for Jonathan, he took Mephibosheth, who was one of Jonathan's family, into his palace, though he was lame and ungainly; and he adopted him as a son, to eat at his royal table. In other words, for the sake of Jonathan's faithful friendship, David allowed one to enter into royal privileges, who had no sort of claim to this personally. In like manner, for the merits' sake of CHRIST, GOD offers to take into His divine household those who are, by manhood, of CHRIST's own lineage, and to adopt them as His children, not because they deserve it, (for, like Mephibosheth they are lame and ungainly) but by an act of unmerited grace, out of love for CHRIST Himself.

RAM. I recollect, also, that when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, many offenders against law were ransomed from imprisonment, for her sake, as a mark of imperial grace.

BISHOP. If that act was not unreasonable, much less should you think it unreasonable, when sinners are allowed a ransom through the infinite merits of One who may be styled "*King of Kings?*" Besides, if, by the fall of man, the entire human family entered into the fatal consequence of one person's *sin*; is it not much more beautiful and just to think that the whole human family should be allowed to enter into the consequences of One Person's *righteousness*? Is there not a moral and philosophical analogy between these two cases, which should satisfy reason, rather than perplex it? Does it not tend to unlock the mystery of Divine *Judgment* against a race which was called to suffer through One Man's guilt coming upon it involuntarily, when we learn that the same race is now introduced into a dispensation of divine *Mercy* through one man's righteousness, which has equally come upon it involuntarily? Is it not a correlative, and supplemental fact which restores, so to speak, the equilibrium, and glorifies both the wisdom and equity of GOD's moral government?

RAM. As far as *theory* goes your statement of the whole sub-

* 2 Sam. ix. 1.

ject seems reasonable. Yet I shall never practically understand it, till I get clearer light as to the manner in which this doctrine of CHRIST'S Mediation can be personally applied to the human conscience.

BISHOP. For that purpose it must not only enter into your reason, but into your affections ; for it is written in our Scriptures, "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,*"* Tell me, have you ever felt sin to be a burden on your conscience, making you sensible that you were subject to condemnation under the judgement of GOD'S holy Law ?

RAM. I have frequently felt accusations of conscience under a sense of wrong doing ; and have yearned after a sense of pardon and peace.

BISHOP. In that case, Christianity proposes peace to the conscience in the following manner. Appealing to this self condemnation on account of past sin, and to this yearning after assurance of pardon, it addresses you, saying,—“ You have no deliverance within yourself. Tears may soften your heart, gifts of gold may be lavished on the poor as self-sacrifice ; penances of self mortification may be inflicted on the body as expressions of repentance and remorse ; but the past wrong doing remains ; the law of GOD is broken and dishonoured ; and it still proclaims you guilty. Nevertheless, the deliverance, which you have not within yourself, has been provided for you, through an all sufficient Mediator and Redeemer ; through One, who without sin, has appeared in your own mortal nature, and has justified manhood in His own Person by obeying the law, and triumphing over death. That Redeemer has risen from the dead as an almighty conqueror over evil, and has entered into heaven with a sanctified and glorified humanity, whose merits have now power to constitute Him your friend and Intercessor. The law, it is true, still condemns you. But He, over whom the Law now has no further power, can plead for the *suspension* of its penalties, while He offers you terms of grace, and promises of pardoning mercy.” Listen, then, to His message :— “ Sinner, you are condemned in yourself ; yet in

* Rom. x. 10.

Me is your help. I stand before GOD as your risen, accepted, and glorified Brother. My righteous Manhood is now all lovely and loved before your Creator. For my sake, therefore (if you will only believe in Me, and ask pardon in My name, and be My disciple) salvation to the uttermost shall be granted you. I hold within My own Manhood immortal and everlasting life. And that life is for you. Because I have obeyed my Father's will, and have "*magnified the law, and made it honourable*,"* it is now rendered consistent with the divine Glory, that all who come to me, should be Mine. Do not doubt, therefore, but trust Me; and follow Me with all your heart; and the door of Heaven shall be opened to you. *Because I live, you shall live also.*†

RAM. The beauty of your theology would be irresistible, were it not that it makes too great a demand upon my faith.

BISHOP. I pray you bear in mind what I said in our previous interview concerning the relationship of faith and reason. I repeat it. They are twin sisters. If the marvel of these truths be not inconsistent with reason, why not let the possibility of their truth assist you to believe them; especially when, if once embraced, they will give peace to your conscience in a manner which nothing else can.

RAM. I should like to be able to embrace them exceedingly. But even my reason is not wholly satisfied.

BISHOP. In what way?

RAM. Your lordship must excuse my entering further into the subject to-day.

* Isaiah. xlii. 21.

† S. John, xiv. 19.

DIALOGUE IX.

RAMCHANDRA'S DIFFICULTIES AS TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

BISHOP. Good morning, Ramchandra, it gives me pleasure to see you again. I long to assist you in your inquiries ; and to satisfy your yearning after inward peace.

RAMCHANDRA. I doubt it not. Yet the subtle workings of my ever restless brain present more obstacles to it than you are aware of.

BISHOP. Be not disheartened. In climbing a lofty mountain, one has to mount up precipice after precipice, and peak after peak, only to find oneself confronted by others still higher. What new difficulties meet you now ? Whatever they may be, I will, at all events, endeavour to provide you with a safe foothold, and to open out a pathway for your continued ascent. It would be a thousand pities, if, after having reached thus far, you were to slip down again.

RAM. Nor is it my wish. But, pursuing your own metaphor I am in a mountain mist.

BISHOP. Let us, then, stay where we are for a while. Even mountain mists clear off with the rising of midday sunshine.

RAM. During our last interview I thought the mist had been clearing. But the gloom has, since then, settled upon me as thick as ever.

BISHOP. What is it which now confuses you ?

RAM. It is not so much with your doctrine of Christ's mediation that I am troubled. My difficulty is even more fundamental than that ; being one which underlies the whole subject ; and without a settlement of which, all that you said in our last two dialogues must go for nothing.

BISHOP. Indeed ! With what has your difficulty to do ?

RAM. It concerns the very fact of Christ's Incarnation itself. Your theory, or speaking more respectfully, your doctrine is, that the Divine Nature became miraculously incarnate in the Person of Christ, just as the Hindu believes in the incarnation of Vishnu, and that He appeared in mortal flesh without sin for the purpose of standing before God as a representative of manhood ; and that He then obeyed all the requirements of the Law as a true and proper Man in order that He might present our nature before God triumphant over the powers of evil.

BISHOP. You have stated it quite correctly. In what respect does this doctrine still confuse and perplex you ? Is it that you think the miraculous nature of the Incarnation beyond belief ?

RAM. I am not indisposed to allow that, where the rectification of moral evil and the salvation of souls from everlasting sorrow were concerned, such a method of divine intervention might be deemed possible. It is not the abstract idea of this Incarnation which perplexes me so much as its adaptation to the intended circumstances of the case. I ask myself in the *first* place, how it was possible that such an intervention of love should have been delayed for thousands of years, when the moral ruin of mankind rendered it equally necessary, if necessary at all, on the immediate outbreak of sin ? Should a fire break out on my premises, do you suppose I would see it raging for hours, before I attempted to extinguish it ? If I even broke a window in my house, do you think I should wait until all my children had bleeding fingers, before setting to work to mend it. In like manner, when the world became morally ruined by sin, is it likely that God would have postponed the rectification of that ruin during four thousand years, or more ; when, in the interval, evil was abounding and increasing, flowing throughout the earth like hot and scorching lava from an ever active volcano ? That is my first question.

BISHOP. Pray do not stop there in your inquiry. Go on and ask me another question which is quite as necessary, if you wish to carry your unbelief to its logical issue. Ask me how it was possible for an omniscient GOD, who must needs have foreseen all this moral ruin, ever to have thought of creating man, when it

could only be rectified afterwards by an act of miraculous intervention ! Ask me how the Incarnation of a Redeemer could have been necessary, except upon the supposition that Creation itself was a blunder !

RAM. The Bishop is unusually severe to-day.

BISHOP. He is only pursuing your query to its inevitable end.

RAM. I wonder you are not afraid to propose such a thought. In saying this, you almost tempt me to continued infidelity.

BISHOP. Truth has nothing to fear from the most remorseless criticism. If a difficulty exist, nothing is gained by shrinking from it.

RAM. As far as I can see, reason has no reply to the difficulty your lordship has just named.

BISHOP. Is not that because ignorance, assuming the character of reason, seats herself, in the chair of judgment ; and opens her mouth to speak while her eyes are bandaged and blind ?

RAM. My lord, this severity is not like yourself.

BISHOP. It is enough to make one severe, when ignorance steps in between reason and faith ; jostling them asunder in a spirit of petulant pride, only for the purpose of pushing faith toward the wall, and making her stumble.

RAM. Surely if reason confesses her ignorance, she has a right to ask for enlightenment.

BISHOP. Certainly. Yet does not ignorance turn into presumption, if she settle the matter off hand, the moment she is unable to discover an answer ? Patience is one of the secrets of true philosophy. Are we at liberty to pronounce any of the operations of nature a blunder, when we cannot find an immediate solution to some of their apparent contrarieties ? In that case, the true spirit of philosophy bids reason sit in her chair of judgment, and *wait* ; it does not prompt ignorance to speak with scornful and arrogant impatience.

RAM. You are right. And there is little or no ground for making any difference in the case of religious difficulties. Only that in religious difficulties (or, at all events, in this one) reason must wait on, I expect, for ever !

BISHOP. Are you sure of that ? When a true philosopher

meets with contrarieties of law which he cannot see his way to reconcile or determine, he has such an unwavering confidence in the perfection of nature, that, while still ignorant of any certain solution, he *postulates suppositions* of his own as a *temporary expedient*, if they sufficiently account for his difficulties. Take, for example, the undulatory theory of light. This is only a theory devised by science as the best solution of the phenomena which are connected with that department of nature. It cannot be proved with perfect certitude. It is but a supposition, scientifically *postulated* as correct, until some clearer and more decided discovery shall have superseded it. In theology we claim the same liberty. We do not say for a certainty :—"The solution is this or that." We *postulate*, like the philosopher, a supposition which is reasonable enough for the time being. Meanwhile we wait and say :—"In the absence of a positive certitude, this gives us enough foot-hold for our faith."

RAM. I perfectly understand the analogy, and allow its justice. For which cause let me ask what theory you postulate in order to render the difficulty of which we were speaking resolvable by reason.

BISHOP. How can we tell, but that this long continuation of human sin and judgment, on the one side, and of redeeming love and righteousness on the other side, may not have opened out lessons of truth before myriads of unfallen worlds, by which the rest of the universe has been preserved from similar degeneracy ; while, at the same time, it may yet continue to glorify the wisdom and the goodness of GOD for everlasting ages ? How can we tell, but that this earth may have been expressly appointed, in the midst of creation, as a theatre of conflict between good and evil, through which good shall at last become universally triumphant, and the moral government of GOD be recovered to one of indisputable and eternal obedience ?

RAM. The idea is sublime. But you must not call upon me to prove a negative,

BISHOP. Nor do I. All proof is impossible. Such, however, is the idea which I postulate, as capable of reconciling your difficulties. Is not the bare conception of so glo-

rious a thought enough to give room for your faith and to satisfy your reason ? Under this view of sin and Redemption, the fall of man might possibly have proved a greater gain to the innumerable worlds of yet unfallen intelligences, than if man had even never been created. Where we know so little of things unseen it is better to let reason even take the wings of imagination than allow ignorance to turn into the accuser of Almighty wisdom.

RAM. Your words are weighty. Yet they do not altogether explain the greater length of time which elapsed before Redemption was sent to recover this ruined world.

BIHSOP. That difficulty is of the same nature as the former. It is but the babbling of human ignorance uttered from the seat of affected wisdom. You ask why the Incarnation of the Son of GOD did not take place some thousands of years earlier than our Scriptures represent. But how can you feel certain that, if this had been the case, the world's regeneration would have been any more forwarded than it is at present ? In saying this, you imply that you are a better judge of all the circumstances of the case than GOD was Himself. Is not that like the petulance of a child, who rebukes his father for delaying an act which, in his youthful ignorance, he supposes had better have been done at some earlier moment. Is not the father more likely to be a better judge of the right time for his actions than his child ? If you wished, for example, to renovate your garden, and postponed it for a season under the exercise of motives known only to yourself, would you allow one of your little children to call your judgment in question, because you did not set about it at once ? I am sure you would not. In like manner would not our own humility be better exhibited, under a consciousness of ignorance, by remaining silent as to this delay of CHRIST'S Incarnation, rather than by questioning omniscient wisdom for not having been more prompt in the wondrous work. Must not the divine mind have been a better judge of the proper time and season for working out its own beneficent purposes, than our own finite minds can be ?

RAM. Put into that shape, there seems little power of reply. Nevertheless reason cannot help feeling that, in the revolution of

four thousand years or more, during which the world was waiting for this Redeemer, evil was becoming unnecessarily triumphant.

BISHOP. Why "unnecessarily"? Did you ever hear of an abscess being taken from a human body until the inward core had become properly developed? Before that, only an unskilful surgeon would put his knife to his patient. An ignoramus only would say:—"Why do you allow the abscess to get worse? Why do you let it grow larger?" In like manner, must not the divine Physician have had far better reasons for judging of the "*fulness of time*" when His Son should become incarnate for the work of Redemption, than we can possibly have? Doubtless GOD waited, because He had moral purposes to conserve which would ultimately make the chosen period more fitted for their accomplishment, albeit we in our ignorance, may be unable to trace them. Is not this another opportunity for those beautiful twin sisters, reason and faith, to kiss each other, acknowledging the probability of a higher wisdom than their own? Besides which, you have to remember that, in one sense, the consequences of Redemption extended as much to the generations which were *antecedent* to the birth of Christ as to *remoter* generations. Every true seeker after GOD, even in the Old Testament days, was a partaker of the benefits of the Incarnation, as freely as you or I may be now. Thus the question of time is, in a great degree, eliminated.

RAM. Very well. Then I will pass on to a second and more serious question?

BISHOP. What is that?

RAM. You teach me that the Son of God became Incarnate for the purpose of reoccupying the place of man within fallen creation, in order that He might stand before God, and recontest the battle against temptation as one of the human family. Now, if He had been simply an unfallen man, I can well understand such a representative championship; because he would then have been an exact counterpart to your first created Adam, and consequently a true exponent of our own race. But when you tell me that He brought into our manhood all the forces of the Divine nature, then the entire propriety of this parallel appears to be lost. For, in thus refighting the battle of righteous manhood against sin, the

conflict on His side, must have carried along with it an almighty strength, and an invincible holiness, which separated Him essentially from the position in which man had been placed during his original probation. The representative character of your human Redeemer was, therefore, imperfect, unanalogous, and incongruous. If He had been merely a perfect man, and as man alone had regained all which had been lost through our first parents, then there would have been great power in your argument. When, however, you say that, besides being perfect man, He was also perfect God in One Person, you destroy the integrity of His manhood, and reduce the parallelism to a shadow. For what merit could it have been in your Redeemer, as a Divine Being, to overcome temptation? It was utterly and inherently impossible for God to fall into sin. Hence, the whole contest presents the appearance of unreality. The battle was a mere sham. Fighting with divine strength as well as with human, He must have occupied a totally different ground from that which you describe. He brought forces into the arena of moral conflict which were not at the disposal of the original parent head of our race; and therefore He failed to be a true and proper representative of it.

BISHOP. You have stated your position with great clearness, and I am glad you have opened this apparent incongruity. It is one, however, which is so very obvious, that, if the case were really as you have put it, the difficulty would be unanswerable. Had our Redeemer, when tempted to sin, brought the strength of His divine nature to rehabilitate the weakness of His human nature, I should be free to admit the impossibility of our regarding Him as a true and proper Representative of manhood in its conflict with moral evil. I should very frankly allow too, that the nature of CHRIST's moral obedience to the law of GOD could not then have strictly corresponded, to the character of our own required obedience. But our Scriptures represent the very contrary. The only assistance which CHRIST is described as having received in His manhood under temptation was exactly that which we ourselves enjoy, and which Adam also must have experienced in his period of probation;—namely, the sustaining and strengthening power of the Holy Spirit. For are we not told that when

JESUS had been baptised in the river Jordan, the "*Spirit of God descended on Him?*"* Now if He had been led into the spiritual conflict with temptation, which immediately followed this act, in the strength of His divine nature, to what end would He have needed this strengthening aid of the Holy Spirit? It was obviously given Him to be the support of His Manhood in precisely the same way as the Spirit is given to ourselves when we ask for that blessed Comforter. That fact alone ought to be sufficient to convince you that it was the human nature of CHRIST, apart from His divine nature, which entered into conflict with sin. Add to this, however, the further fact, that when JESUS CHRIST was tempted in the wilderness, He was, "*led by the Spirit.*"† In other words, He did not go thither in the sovereignty of His Divine nature; for had that been the case, He would not have required the guiding power of the Holy Spirit thus especially given to Him. He would have gone forth in His own Divine strength, apart from any co-operating power of the Godhead. Nor need we wonder. For Scripture teaches us, that, while the human and divine nature of CHRIST were mysteriously conjoined within One Person, they each worked within entirely separate spheres. That is to say, there were properties belonging to one nature which found no response in the other. For example, when JESUS said, "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,*"‡ it was solely the voice of His manhood speaking in terms of anguish, with which His divine nature could have had no communion; the divinity within His Person being hidden, so to speak, in the background. And if the divine nature within His Person could not groan and suffer, so neither could it be tempted; it is not only that our Scripture says "*God cannot be tempted*"§ but that reason itself asserts the same sentiment. Such a thought would be altogether derogatory to the divine glory.

RAM. True. But the question is, whether the divine nature, which you affirm to have been in Christ, was not so inseparably connected with His humanity as to have necessarily energised and defended it.

* S. Matt. iii. 16. † S. Luke. iv. 1. ‡ S. Matt. xxvi. 39.

§ S. James. i. 13.

BISHOP. Have I not already urged the cry of mortal anguish in Gethsemane as a reason to the contrary? That cry would have been altogether meaningless, nay impossible, if we were to suppose that His human nature was aided by the divine. It was the cry of humanity in all its essential weakness, (though without sin) and does not discover to us a single glimpse of the omnipotent support of His own divinity. Again, this fact was still more illustrated in one of the Redeemer's last exclamations upon the Cross. He there cried, "*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*"* If that did not exhibit the weakness of veritable humanity, unsupported by the strength of the divine nature which lay within Him, I know not what words could have expressed it. The case, then, being thus in His *last* struggle with the powers of evil, we infer that it was just the same in this *first* struggle during His Temptation in the wilderness. Besides which, we have it written in another place,—"*He was tempted in all points, like as we are.*"† But how could His temptations have been like our own if they had been met by the strength of His divine nature superadded to His human? You are, therefore, quite right in arguing that, when the endurance of temptation by the Redeemer was a challenge, on His part, as the Representative of man's original righteousness against the same evil power which had previously overcome it, the whole issue must have necessarily rested on His ability to overcome it without any intervention of His divinity. Had it been otherwise, the conflict would have been conducted on unequal terms; inasmuch as the divine side of His Being must have been irresistible. Viewed in that manner, it would be deprived of the very chief feature which makes it so precious to us—*viz.*, that it was Man's recovery of his own righteousness. Here, then, is the "*Seed of the woman*" who has, "*bruised the Serpent's head.*" Here is the promised Redeemer of the world, who, having stood in our own place, under the curse due to sin, has won back the kingdom which Adam lost, and restored our nature, embodied in His own sinless Person, to GOD. And now, on the Father's throne, in His own

* S. Matt. xxvii. 46.

† Heb. iv. 15.

victorious manhood conjoined to His Eternal Sonship, He sits as LORD and Saviour,—“*able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.*”*

RAM. I certainly had no idea that you would have answered my difficulty so well. Yet I cannot say that I believe. I will allow that your system is grand; nay infinitely superior to any other form of faith which I have hitherto ranked amongst the superstitions of mankind. But do not think that you have yet convinced me.

BISHOP. It is something to have inspired your respect. Nor am I without hope that, in due time, your respect will turn into veneration, and your veneration into belief.

RAM. It happens to-day as it has been before. You settle one difficulty for me by opening out another.

BISHOP. Let me hear what now perplexes you.

RAN. It appears to me that, by saying what you have respecting the non-intervention of Christ's Divinity in the work of His Redemption, you take away all meaning from the doctrine of His divine Incarnation. The advent of an unfallen archangel, enshrined in mortal yet sinless flesh, might have achieved the same purposes. I do not object to your theory of some kind of supernatural Incarnation, in order to achieve the glorious purposes of man's recovery to righteousness. But I fail to see any reasonableness in the necessity for a *divine* Incarnation. You have strengthened your position in one way, but you have weakened it in another.

BISHOP. In the *first* place, if an incarnate angel or archangel had been found willing to endure the curse, and to pass through the sufferings and temptations which were necessary for fulfilment of the law by man, is there, (in the absence of proof to the contrary) any evidence that our Redemption would have been successfully achieved? If you have a right to postulate its achievement, I have an equal right to postulate its failure. In the *second* place, what proof have we that such intense sympathy, love, and self sacrifice could have been found among any of God's un-

* Heb. vii. 25.

fallen creation ? In the *third* place, even if an archangel had really had such a spirit of love and self sacrifice, what probability is there that he would have had courage and self confidence enough to risk the venture of a failure, and so of falling himself under an everlasting curse ? Put all these thoughts together, and I think you will readily perceive the difficulties of your own supposition, which is but based upon a series of vague assumptions and improbabilities.

RAM. Why may I not say that your own remarks are equally based upon a series of assumptions and probabilities ?

BISHOP. Antecedently to the fact of a divine Revelation on the subject, you might say so. With that Revelation before us, however, which speaks nothing respecting your own theory, all we have to do is to see whether reason cannot grasp a higher and more glorious set of consequences resulting from the doctrine of CHRIST'S Incarnation than it could from the incarnation of any created angel.

RAM. Before we have done, you will have to adduce some general evidence of the truth of that Revelation, quite independently of the subjects now under discussion.

BISHOP. Let that discussion rest for awhile. Do not turn away from the present subject under consideration. What I wish to point out to you is the fact that Redemption, effected by an Incarnation of the SON of GOD, is immeasurably more sublime, infinitely more blessed to the human race, and an inconceivably grander exhibition of love, than any Redemption which could have been effected through the intervention of an incarnate angel.

RAM. Please to be more explicit.

BISHOP, *First*, as to its being a grander exhibition of love, Must not the love of GOD Himself be considered greater than that of any created being ? And is not compassion for sinners, coming from one who has been justly grieved and offended by them, far greater than compassion coming from another who has had no such personal cause for offence ? When you hear, therefore, of this overflowing love of the SON of GOD towards His enemies ; when you reflect that He came forth voluntarily and freely from the FATHER as the "*unspeakable gift*" of eternal compas-

sion toward a ruined race, does it not touch your heart at once as a matchless and unfathomable act of mercy beyond all possible comparison with the pitying compassion of even an unfallen angel? Why, then, should you talk of the inferior and finite, when Revelation lifts you up to the superior and the infinite? Why should you not receive this stupendous display of the love of CHRIST, and repose upon it with adoring gratitude?

RAM. It appears to be an amazing mystery, too great for belief.

BISHOP. Nothing is too great for GOD. He is as infinite in His mercy and grace, as He is in His power and judgment. See it further, by considering, *secondly*, how much more immeasurably this doctrine of a divine Incarnation blesses the human race, than any angelic incarnation could have blessed it. You have inquired why it was that the SON of GOD tabernacled in our flesh, notwithstanding that throughout His earthly conflict with sin and death His divinity rendered no assistance to His Manhood. You seem to think that this union of the Divine with human nature was, therefore, meaningless and purposeless.

RAM. That is the exact point of my objection.

BISHOP. The loving and gracious purpose of that union of the Divine and human nature in the One Person of our Redeemer was chiefly *prospective*. Had an archangel only redeemed us, our human nature would have been merely raised from the grave to a level with heavenly hierarchies. That indeed would have been grace beyond all previous conception. But now, by this wondrous love of the SON of GOD Incarnate, we are elevated, in Him, far above angels or archangels. For CHRIST has taken our glorified humanity to the very Throne of GOD itself. Is not this a victory over sin, therefore, which is far more transcendently glorious than any other form of Redemption that can be conceived? Well might one of our apostles exclaim "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*"* And again,—"*Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!*"†

* Rom. v. 20.

† Rom. xi. 33.

RAM. I confess that no religion ever taught so sublime a doctrine. I cannot argue. I can only wonder.

BISHOP. Yet this is by no means all. For the doctrine of CHRIST's Incarnation supplies all true Christians with a fountain head of divine sympathy in their trials, sorrows and temptations, which no other method of salvation could procure for them. You may now look up to a Brother who holds your own nature on the Throne of GOD; who while He can sympathise with you in all your infirmities, because He once felt them Himself, has, at the same time, infinite power, by His divine nature, to alleviate and assuage them; one who can support you by a strength which never fails, and by a faithfulness which can never be broken. Think of this, and then tell me whether there is not good ground for our rejoicing in this precious doctrine of a divine Incarnation.

RAM. Enough. Whatever other difficulties I may yet have unsolved, I see at all events that Christianity is a sublime faith, and that those only can understand its grandeur who allow themselves to believe and trust. I heartily wish I could grasp all this in my own experience.

BISHOP. Do not despair, Ramchandra. The words of CHRIST Himself when on earth were, "*If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.*"* Seek the heavenly draught and your cup shall be full.

* S. John. vii. 37.

DIALOGUE X.

RAMCHANDRA PROCEEDS TO INQUIRE INTO THE DOCTRINE OF
THE TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD.

RAMCHANDRA. Leading me, as your lordship has now done, into an admiration of your mysterious yet not unreasonable system of belief, I am still staggered by one doctrine. You have spoken to me of God, under an assumption that He consists of three divine Persons, *viz.*, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I think you call this, in theological language, the doctrine of the Trinity.

BISHOP. It is called so in the language of dogmatic theology. But it is nowhere so termed in our Scriptures.

RAM. I did not interrupt you by any objection upon this subject in your previous arguments; because I thought it unfair to divert you from your various lines of reasoning. It is always a mistake, if one is earnestly searching after truth, unnecessarily to embarrass a subject.

BISHOP. Let me thank you for your forbearance.

RAM. You will not be surprised, however, if I now say that this doctrine is to my mind unreasonable and self contradictory; and that it is utterly repugnant to the essential idea of Monotheism.

BISHOP. I am not in the least surprised. I felt as certain this was coming, as that the South-west monsoon will be sure to follow our present hot weather. In considering it, however, I must first ask whether you will consent to discuss it with calmness and humility?

RAM. The subject is really so utterly incomprehensible, that I am afraid I shall find it very difficult to do as you wish.

BISHOP. Why so? Though incomprehensible, it is neverthe-

less, quite apprehensible. Do you recognise the difference between those two words ?

RAM. I suppose you mean to say that, while it cannot be fully grasped by reason, its general character may yet be conceived and apprehended as not unreasonable.

BISHOP. Precisely. For instance, you cannot fully grasp by reason the manner in which the three primary colours resolve unitedly into white light. Nevertheless, it is perfectly capable of mental apprehension.

RAM. Your illustration is a happy one.

BISHOP. It is only an illustration after all. I own it proves nothing. I only name it for the purpose of shewing you, under a figure, that just as we can mutually apprehend the existence of a trinity of colours within one light, and yet not comprehend or explain the phenomena ; so we may reasonably apprehend the existence of a Trinity of divine Persons in One GOD, without being able to comprehend, or to explain the doctrine.

RAM. Yes. But the former is apprehensible by the senses, and is capable of being tested and proved by the experiments of natural science ; whereas the other is altogether undemonstrable by human reason.

BISHOP. I suppose no Christian would be rash enough to attempt a demonstration of the doctrine of the Trinity by mere reason. It lies infinitely above reason ; and it required a Revelation to make it known. Hence I fully allow that we cannot comprehend it. But at the same time it is not contradictory to reason.

RAM. It is very difficult to suppose otherwise, when you describe three different Persons as being each Divine, and so compound three Gods into one God. If this does not destroy the true principle of Monotheism, I am at a loss to understand the meaning of human speech.

BISHOP. The word "*Person*" to which you refer only occurs once in our English Bible and is then translated imperfectly. The Greek word is *ὑπόστασις*, (*hypostasis*), and should have been rendered "*Subsistence*." "*Person*" is derived from a Latin word, *Persona*, and utterly fails to represent the true meaning

of the word "Subsistence." The word "Person," therefore, is a purely theological expression, which, instead of being taken in a colloquial, must be understood rather in a technical sense. To say that there are three divine Persons, in the colloquial sense of the word, would justly expose Christianity to your criticism. But to say that there are three eternal "Subsistences" within One divine Spirit does not do so. The three primary colours, for example, may be called separate *subsistences* within one *substance*, viz., light; and thus, (even within the kingdom of nature) it may be said that there is a kind of trinity in unity. If, then, three separate "Subsistences" are revealed to us within One Divine Substance, viz., the Godhead, I cannot see that it is any more contradictory to reason.

RAM. It appears, my lord, that you are unconsciously attempting to escape from a difficulty, by the employment of a metaphysical word which covers your meaning under some vague and indeterminate idea.

BISHOP. There is surely nothing vague or indeterminate in the idea of "*Subsistence*." It simply means "*Inherence in something else*." Thus, I have a right to speak of the three primary colours as luminous "subsistences," because, while separate in function, they are yet inseparably inherent within one substance called light. In a somewhat similar manner, therefore, although infinitely above it, I have a right to conceive the possibility of there being three divine "Subsistences," which, while separate in their functions, are yet inseparably inherent within One divine nature. I cannot explain, or comprehend this. Yet it is not beyond the apprehension of my reason.

RAM. That must be, because you have been educated in this belief from your youth. To myself, it merely presents the idea of a philosophical abstraction.

BISHOP. That is because you know not, as yet, how to regard it in connection with its *moral* significance. It is the great fault of almost all controversialists, that they discuss this doctrine in a speculative and metaphysical, rather than in a moral sense. So long as that is the case, everything will remain undetermined. Viewed, however, in connection with its moral significance, it is

far otherwise. It then becomes responsive to some of the deepest wants and cravings of our nature.

RAM. Please to explain what you mean by that statement. For to my own mind, it is antagonistic both to reason and conscience.

BISHOP. I can well understand your feelings. You are in the same position as a man who first looks through a stereoscope ; to whose eyes the picture presents no view which clearly addresses itself to his own consciousness. Keep your eyes fixed, however, on the picture ; follow the lines of thought which it gradually opens to you ; and the view will come out more palpably by and by.

RAM. Your illustrations are ingenious, to say the least of them.

BISHOP. I speak only as I feel, and have no authority to compel your assent. At the same time, I think it not unlikely that both your reason and conscience may follow me.

RAM. Please to go on.

BISHOP. In the *first* place,—regarding Monotheism in its simplest form,—*viz.*, as the doctrine of one self-existing and Eternal Spirit, who, before the creation of a material atom, or the formation of an angelic being, dwelt in the vast solitudes of infinite space, having no power of sympathy or communion with any existence outside Himself ; regarding this conception of Deity as true, I have always felt it to be a cold and cheerless doctrine. Sympathy and fellowship seem to be as much the inherent and eternal principles of moral life, as are holiness, justice, or goodness. I know not how it may strike your own mind, Ramchandra, but, for my part, I cannot conceive this utter isolation of One Self-complacent Being, who contained within Himself, as the fountain head of all moral life, the power of sympathy, love and fellowship. I cannot conceive such a Self Existent Being apart from an indulgence, within His own Nature, of those essential principles of happiness. That a Being, with infinite powers such as those, should have remained, during the isolation and solitude of a past eternity, in a state of happiness without any means for their gratification, appears to be an impossible condition of perfect moral life. I mean that such a state of

existence seems intuitively a self contradiction. When I read, therefore, in our Revelation, that within this One Divine Nature there were three equally divine and self-existing "Subsistences," between whom love, sympathy, and mutual intercounsellings could go forward, Monotheism, (without being in the least degree controverted) has a glory and a grandeur shed over it which it never could have otherwise had. In the contemplation of a Being like this, I look up with a sense of relief; because I can then think of GOD, as having more than a mere sterile power of Self-complacency, and solitary Self-enjoyment. Then those grand words of the One Creator "*Let us make man in our own image*"* sound out responsively to my own intuitions, teaching me that, within the divine Unity, there must have been separable yet indivisible "*Subsistences*" which were capable of sympathetic and of active inter-communion. No one can understand still less explain this. Nevertheless, there is a beauty and a fitness in the mere idea which can alone satisfy my antecedent conceptions of Deity.

RAM. The thought which you have thus propounded is entirely new to me, and worthy of my deepest consideration. Yet it does not altogether remove the subject from the sphere of philosophical abstraction.

BISHOP. Perhaps not. It places the doctrine, however, on a moral ground which elevates it far above the platform of mere intellectual speculation, or of metaphysical sophistry. I mean to say that, viewed in this manner, it no longer remains a dry mental thesis, but a question which touches our moral sense, appealing to those innate feelings of our nature which make us shrink from utter loneliness, and crave after sympathy and fellowship.

RAM. I see that clearly. But it is none the less incomprehensible.

BISHOP. You do but repeat what I have all the way fully allowed. But if the doctrine be above our finite comprehension, it is capable of a well defined apprehension, and all the more so, when connected with other moral considerations. May I now proceed to the next point?

* Gen. i. 26.

RAM. By all means. I am becoming more interested in the subject than I expected to be.

BISHOP. My next position brings me to the titles and offices of these three "Subsistences" within the Divine Unity; viz., the "FATHER," the "SON" and the "HOLY SPIRIT." In speaking upon which, my sole object will be to shew you how this threefold Revelation of GOD, while it meets all the wants and cravings of our moral nature, presents Him to us doctrinally as One and the Self same Unity.

RAM. If you can do that, you will perform a surprising task.

BISHOP. Were I to attempt to shew you this philosophically, you might well express surprise. But when I say, I will shew it doctrinally, you need not. For though the doctrine, properly explained, be not unphilosophical, yet, within the doctrine, there lies a mystery which no human philosophy can unravel. After all, you need not wonder at this. There is precisely the same difficulty with the doctrine both of the Deist and Atheist. For the former postulates an Eternal Self-existent *Spirit*, which no amount of philosophy can explain; while the latter postulates an Eternal Self-existence of *Matter*, which is even a harder task for philosophical explanation. Thus, reason must admit the incomprehensible, even under such systems of belief. And what wonder? When we have to do with the infinite and the transcendental, there must needs be some inexplicable mystery.

RAM. Those remarks are quite unanswerable, I will consequently concede to your doctrine the necessary element of mystery; only do not let it be contrary to reason.

BISHOP. I promise you that; otherwise I could not myself be a Christian.

RAM. Proceed, then, at your leisure; for I doubt not you will continue to interest, even should you fail to satisfy me.

BISHOP. Let me first speak of the title and office of GOD, as the "FATHER." By using this term, Revelation had no intention of indicating any essential priority or pre-eminence over the "SON," and, the "HOLY SPIRIT;" for our doctrine is, that these three "Subsistences" within the Divine Unity are "Co-equal and Co-eternal," none being before, or after the other.

RAM. Your mystery then is unreasonable in its commencement. For the very idea of Father is essentially antecedent to that of Son, as well as pre-eminent over it.

BISHOP. If these titles were intended to be interpreted after a natural manner, it would be so. But they are not used in that sense. However great a mystery it may be, you must understand our Scriptures to represent this "Subsistence" of the "SON" as a Co-eternal Emanation from the "Subsistence" of the "FATHER;" each being equal in the "Substance" of the Divine Being, but the "SON" being voluntarily subordinated to the "FATHER" (who for ever remains hidden within the invisible and incommunicable depths of Divine Glory) in order that He might be the visible Exponent of the Godhead to the universe. In view therefore of the "SON" having had this sublime office from all eternity without a compeer, He is called, after a figurative manner,—the "ONLY BEGOTTEN" of the FATHER. Thus your criticism as to His inferiority falls to the ground. I grant you that in the application of such human titles to the Divine Being, their analogy with our own use of the words must necessarily be indistinct. For, in our *ordinary* use of them we predicate actual physiological relationship; whereas in our *doctrinal* usage of them, we only imply relative and moral relationship. You must not, therefore, reason about them on the first ground, when we employ them only on the second. By such a course as that, you might make any thing appear to be self-contradictory.

RAM. I admit it. But, by so saying, do you not allow your divine nomenclature to be very misleading?

BISHOP. The imperfection of human language allows of no better or closer analogy. If any other word had been discoverable more adequate for the purpose, it would doubtless have been used. To photograph or adumbrate things that are infinite, you cannot but expect some features of inexactness. At all events, this use of the word "FATHER" in relation to *ourselves*, presents us with a moral discovery of the divine Nature which both attracts and satisfies our affections. Even many heathen nations have rejoiced in dimly picturing GOD under the character of a Father. They have delighted to see, in the Creator, a Being

who regards all men as His children; and who, in the moral government of the world rules over them with compassion and love. Now, by this Revelation of the Trinity, all such aspirations are not only met, but certified and more abundantly satisfied. Do we not read that,—“*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him*”?* “*If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him*?”† Are we not taught to pray,—“*Our Father which art in Heaven*?”‡ Is He not called the “*Father of Spirits*”?§ And again,—“*the Father of mercies*”?|| Do not these moral aspects of the Divine nature tend to fill us with perpetual consolation?

RAM. Yes. And if your Revelation ended there, all difficulty would cease.

BISHOP. Other difficulties however would open. Consider GOD as your Father, and Creator. Imagine that you knew nothing more about Him. Am I not right in saying that a God who is invisible, and who makes no discoveries of Himself, as a Father except in the works of nature, is very indistinctly recognisable as compared with our own knowledge of Him by Revelation? Does not natural religion like this leave a man still in the dark? Contrast it, however, with our Christian doctrine, in which GOD is revealed through the fuller mystery of His nature. According to that doctrine, the “FATHER,” (while hidden within the Eternal, Ineffable, Invisible, and Incommunicable depths of divine glory), is yet revealed before the universe by the “SON,” who is described as, “*the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His Subsistence*.”¶ Not only has this visible manifestation of the FATHER been thus presented before the universe in creation; but even still more wonderfully in Redemption. For, when the “SON” of GOD became incarnate, then, through the veil of His spotless Manhood, He manifested the glory of the “FATHER” by revealing His will, and declaring His wondrous love to sinners. “*He that hath seen me, hath seen the “Father,”*”** were His own

* Psalm. ciii. 13.

† S. Luke. xi. 13.

‡ S. Matt. vi. 9.

§ Heb. xii. 9.

|| 2. Cor i. 3.

¶ Heb. i. 3.

** S. John. xiv. 9.

words. As to the nature of the Revelation of the FATHER to man, I need not now say anything, because we have already travelled over the theme, and you have acknowledged that it is at least theoretically beautiful and sublime. What I wish rather to point out is, that in it the SON of GOD was a visible expression of the "FATHER'S Love," an open manifestation of the divine Mind and Power; a Personal Revelation of GOD'S Grace and Glory, both in triumphing over moral evil, and in vindicating Righteousness before the universe. When you, therefore, trace the blessed agency of these two Eternal "Subsistences," inherent within One GOD, I ask, does not such a view of the Divine Nature impress you with more admiration and wonder, with more intense satisfaction and comfort, than the cold and naked idea of ordinary Monotheism does, which leaves your mind only under the abstract notion of an Infinite Spirit that has reigned alone through eternity with an unbroken empire of solitude? Does it not touch your heart by appealing to your *moral* sentiments? And, on that account, is it not more forcible and attractive.

RAM. It would most surely do so, if I could only believe all you say to be truth.

BISHOP. Why not allow the moral influence of this doctrine to supersede its intellectual difficulty?

RAM. My conscience cannot act in the midst of a mental fog.

BISHOP. What! Did you never feel in a mental fog when you tried to fathom the idea of an Eternally Uncreated, Self-existent Spirit; or of universal, unbounded, and infinite Space?

RAM. I cannot but allow it.

BISHOP. Did that circumstance prevent your conscience from acting? Did that make the moral influence of GOD'S Being inoperative upon your heart, and its affections?

RAM. ———

BISHOP. Why do you not reply?

RAM. Because I see the use which you will make of my confession.

BISHOP. Be honest, then, with yourself; and admit that mystery in a doctrine, if it be otherwise morally cogent, forms no necessary argument against its truth.

RAM. Your lordship must be patient ; for you have not yet finished your exposition of this mysterious subject.

BISHOP. You are right, Ramchandra ; and I am glad you have summoned me to the completion of my task. Indeed your own feeling of helplessness in coming to a judgment upon it leads me to do so. For there is another Co-eternal "Subsistence" in the Divine Unity which exactly meets your mental impotence. Do you not know that when a beautiful picture is placed before an uncultured person, it fails to evoke any real appreciation ? The eye must first be opened by the refinement of education ; otherwise, the painting, be it ever so exquisite, will have no proper effect upon the mind. Is it not so ?

RAM. Undoubtedly.

BISHOP. In a similar manner we have naturally little power of appreciating this wonderful picture of divine Redemption. To the Jews it was "*a stumbling block* ;" and to the Greeks "*foolishness*." And so it has been in all ages. Our Scriptures say, "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them,—because they are spiritually discerned.*"* Hence the HOLY SPIRIT, the *third* Co-eternal "Subsistence" within the Divine Unity, and proceeding both from the "FATHER" and the "SON," is our Teacher, our Sanctifier, and our Comforter ; His office it is to meet our moral wants *subjectively*, by assisting our apprehensions of divine Revelation ; just as it was the object of the "SON" to meet those moral wants *objectively*, by providing us with the substance of a Revelation. Through the agency of this HOLY SPIRIT, therefore, every sincere inquirer into Christianity has now a higher power than his own which assists him in the discovery of truth ; and every believer in that truth, however weak, has a higher power than his own, which enables him to rejoice in it as an accepted, regenerated and adopted child of God. Thus, in this economy of Divine Grace, I find every thing which ministers to the enlightenment of my mind, as well as to the consolation and purification of my heart. I rise up from a contemplation of this

* 1. Cor. ii. 14.

divinely revealed view of GOD'S Being with a flush of grateful satisfaction. I am filled with an overflowing rapture of joy which tells me that GOD is indeed perfect. I cannot metaphysically explain the subject ; yet I am conscious that it exactly meets all my deepest moral wants and aspirations. Oh ! Ramchandra, do not puzzle yourself with intellectual difficulties. Only believe. Trust this sacred Book. Sit down before the Eternal Throne, and simply thank GOD for the sweetness, and fulness of such a Revelation. You have in that Revelation moral grounds for the reception of this doctrine which places it on a footing infinitely preferable to the most learned of theological treatises. Study it in this light, and your last difficulties will vanish.

RAM. I must acknowledge that you have surprised me. I came prepared for a philosophical discussion, and you send me away with an appeal to my conscience which stops my mouth from all further argument. This is not what I expected. It has been exposition rather than reasoning.

BISHOP. Excuse me. It is true that I have not attempted to *prove* the doctrine. Who could ? Nevertheless I have shewn you, on moral grounds, that it is not only not unreasonable, but even antecedently probable, and practicably apprehensible and useful ; meeting the wants of man as a moral being ; and lifting him up as a redeemed sinner to recovered heights of heavenly glory.

RAM. You have fairly stripped me of my armour and left me without power to fight. I will therefore sheath my sword, and leave you a bloodless victory.

BISHOP. Am I to understand that you assent to this cardinal doctrine of Christianity ?

RAM. I only wish every one would treat it in the same sensible manner. Cavillings and quarrels would then cease. As for myself, I cannot say that I believe ; but my prejudices have certainly been removed, and I see the whole question in an entirely new light.

BISHOP. May GOD grant you a full surrender of both mind and heart to this glorious Revelation. Take my advice, Ramchandra. Familiarize yourself with the contemplation of it. Pray

for divine enlightenment. Regard GOD, as a "FATHER" who is revealed in His "SON" Jesus Christ, through the agency of His own Eternal "SPIRIT." Those few words, properly understood, in no way disturb the "Substance," of the divine Unity ; while they exhibit three "Subsistences" of the "Trinity within that Unity" after a manner which is precisely adapted to all your moral and spiritual wants. More than that we shall never discover in this world ; but in that knowledge we shall be saved for evermore.

DIALOGUE XI.

RAMCHANDRA ASKS FOR SOME SHORT AND SIMPLE EVIDENCES OF
CHRISTIANITY AS A DIVINE REVELATION.

RAMCHANDRA. You spoke the other day about my last difficulties vanishing. That will never be until you can shew me the *evidence* upon which you believe in these mysteries of a divine Revelation. I confess them to be sublime. Indeed, since the last few interviews with your lordship, my mind has been in a perpetual blaze of light. I seem to stand confronted by a system of belief which is infinitely grander than any presented by the philosophers of Greece or Rome, of Hinduism or of Buddhism. Yet, for ought I know, it may be only like those, the mere creation of human thought. In a word, what proof have you that Christianity was communicated to mankind directly from God Himself?

BISHOP. I am afraid it would be too long a business to enter into any full investigation of the Evidences of Christianity. A library of volumes has been written upon it.

RAM. A religion which requires a library of volumes to prove it carries its own condemnation. If its evidences cannot be brought home to the simple and unlearned without a life-long study, they cannot be suited to the mass of mankind.

BISHOP. You are right, Ramchandra. Nor does it really require such voluminous treatment; except so far as it has to reply to the many captious and unreasonable attacks which are continually made upon it by unbelievers. The bulk of what has been written upon the subject results from unnecessary criticism. If, however, you will be content with one line of simple evidence, which to my own mind is amply sufficient, I will give it you.

RAM. By so doing you would grant me an inestimable favour.

BISHOP. Begin, then, by understanding that Christianity did not originate with the birth and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was the perfected and developed fulness of a Revelation which had been previously communicated by GOD to man from the commencement of the human race. You must not compare it with such religions as Buddhism or Mahomedanism, which were the mere outgrowths of individual minds, and which had little historical genesis. The Revelation of our own Holy Scriptures had a line of continuity, lengthened from age to age through many centuries, passing along the lips and pens of men who were inspired to tell the same set of truths, with unfolding clearness, by One Holy Spirit. It is that which distinguishes our religion from every other which has existed. The religions of ancient Egypt and Assyria are now no more. The philosophies of Greece and Rome have long since died out. Even the sacred writings of Hinduism, from the early Vedas to the Puranas and other Shastras, though they may claim, in a certain sense, continuity, have yet no real unity of purpose; no progressive development of the same set of truths which were proclaimed by different teachers with one predetermined object, culminating in a beauty and a fulness which sheds light over all that has gone before, and which irradiates what was at first only set forth darkly. On the contrary, every one who carefully studies your own sacred books allows that the earliest were the purest; and that, both in a moral and intellectual aspect, the later productions are unworthy subsequents. There is no continuity combined with unity in them, which brightens up to a climax, and which, when finished, presents a code of faith adapted to the wants of the world, and which is responsive to all the deepest feelings of man's universal nature. Christianity alone furnishes us with such a religion; and that evidences its Divinity.

RAM. Your statement sounds grandly; but it needs considerable explanation before I can receive it. You say, for example, that this continuous teaching was revealed by One Spirit. Yet it is only an assertion. You must not expect me to believe it, even with all my respect for your lordship, just because you tell me it was so. I naturally ask for the proof.

BISHOP. For that proof I can only appeal to the candour of your own judgment. Consider the case as I put it before you. Think of the natural and inevitable diversity of human minds stretching throughout a period of so many centuries, and separated from one another by so many different situations, yet all combining to speak with one testimony. Is it antecedently probable that this scattered mass of human thought would have been thus all brought into one focus, unless the same light had shone upon them? Have we not here an *a priori* suggestion that this remarkable consensus of opinion and feeling was something more than natural?

RAM. I do not know that it need be so; when you remember that they were all of one nation, and nursing one set of traditional hopes.

BISHOP. Yes. But when you think of those hopes being consummated in the later age of the nation, when you think of the facts of the New Testament fitting into all these predicted and long announced sentiments of the old Testament, does it not strike you as something more than merely natural? The inspiration of these speakers and writers by One Spirit would reasonably account for it; but, without that, it appears to be inexplicable.

RAM. The whole force of that inference depends upon the clearness and fulness of the evidences, which you can bring forward respecting these prior and later truths, and of their mutually inherent unity. It may be that you exaggerate this point in your zeal; and that they are not so clear as you imagine them to be.

BISHOP. I cannot find the least fault with your incredulity until the evidences are adduced. You would be wrong to yield without some reasonable understanding of their character.

RAM. Will you now proceed with your explanation?

BISHOP. The first consideration is, that, whereas the facts and doctrines of the New Testament are all grouped around One Person, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, who by His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension came to be the Redeemer of the world and to open out salvation to all nations, this one idea is also the teaching of the Old Testament; an idea which runs like

a golden thread throughout the whole texture of Jewish testimony. It is cast into every conceivable form; sometimes in the way of direct prophecy; and at other times in the shape of devotional hopes and aspirations; sometimes in the mould of typical representations under appointed laws of Church ritual; and at other times, under a providential order of events, and personal narratives. The argument drawn from it is, that, in view of the length of the time, the changes of situation, the numbers of individuals, and the multiplicity of circumstances which were involved in Old Testament history, and in view of the fact that everything was exactly in harmony with that which actually transpired under the New Testament dispensation, we have an evidence of One master Mind having originated, continued, and perfected the entire structure. We maintain that this multitudinous arrangement of separate parts throughout one connected whole, stretching over four thousand years, could never have been the work of chance, or any mere human compact. Individual idiosyncrasies of mind, personal variations of disposition, diverging ebullitions of selfwill, natural tendencies to dispute and to form separate schools of thought, (such as are invariably found in all other ages and countries,) would have inevitably disturbed this union of heart and sentiment, had it been left to the unaided powers of man. Experience, observation, and common sense, all seem to require this obvious conclusion. No one who has read the writings of the great heathen teachers of religion can fail to notice this in the various systems which they have from time to time propounded. Every teacher prophesied, if I may so speak, by a species of natural inspiration, and very often, it must be confessed, with great grandeur of thought. But each had his own theory, his own system of truth; one contradicting the other. Scarcely anything was settled or fixed, or held in common veneration by the rest. In reference to the origin of nature, to the existence, the attributes, and the moral government of GOD, to the future of the world's happiness, and to the hopes of life after death, there was a total lack of united testimony. There was no one common hope upon which all expatiated and enlarged. On the contrary, they set up rival schools, and taught opposing tenets. The suc-

cess of one was the downfall of the other. There was nothing approaching to coherence or unity. Now this, of course, was just what might have been expected; because each teacher spoke only according to his own individual genius. And, it must have been equally the case with these Hebrew Teachers, if they had been acting under the same circumstances. The fact, therefore, that it was not so, the fact that through four thousand years we find one compact and united system of teaching, which, without any variation, presented the same set of truths and hopes for the world's future regeneration, and which were all fulfilled historically in the life and teaching of Christ, is too remarkable to be passed over. This we aver to be the direct result of a Revelation which must have been communicated by GOD for the benefit of posterity throughout all ages.

RAM. The argument is powerful and weighty; but the issue of it must depend on the strength of the evidences by which it is supported.

BISHOP. Let me commence then by calling your attention to the first revelation of divine truth, *viz.*, the promise given to our primeval parents concerning Redemption from the curse of sin for the whole world. It consisted in this; that the "*seed of the woman*" should bruise the "*Tempter's head*."* True, it was the merest germ of coming Hope; yet it was one capable of indefinite expansion and irradiation by future Revelations. Whether any such, not revealed to us, were made known to the human race during the long interval which elapsed between Adam and Abraham, it is impossible to say. Considering the nature of the case, however, as well as the references which we find within that period to frequent communications of the Holy Spirit among men, most probably it was so; for we read, "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man*."† At all events, when Abraham was afterwards divinely called out of Chaldea into Canaan, in order to become the head of a specially covenanted family, these promises of universal Redemption for the world immediately reappeared in greater fulness. To that chosen patriarch it

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Gen. vi. 3.

was said : "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing ; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*"* In other words, the first great covenant promise of Redemption from the curse of sin, and of salvation for the whole world, which had been originally granted to the "*Seed of the woman,*" without any limitation or restriction, was then appointed to be the inheritance of a specially elected family ; not by way of caprice or favouritism as I shewed you in our commencing Dialogue, but by way of safeguard and security, to be held by that family as a sacred trust, for the after benefit of all nations. The same promise was afterwards transmitted, through Abraham, to Jacob, to whom it was again said : "*Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth ; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to south ; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"† Subsequently when Jacob's household had grown up into a nation, and had been delivered from its bondage in Egypt, and was journeying into the land of Canaan, the Revelation of this world-wide blessing was once more renewed. GOD said : "*As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with my glory.*"‡ By which statement Moses was taught that he had not been called to act the part of a mere patriot for his own people ; but to conserve the purposes of GOD'S Love and Grace to the whole world, which should ultimately become partaker of His Covenant.

Then followed a period of Hebrew history, when the people, having to be settled in their land, struggled for existence, and were taught by the influences of surrounding idolatry ; during which period the Revelations of GOD were given in defence of pure Monotheism against heathen abominations, rather than in the direction of any enlargement of their world-wide hopes. As soon, however, as their kingdom had become thoroughly settled under David, we find these older Revelations reappearing with greater force and fulness than ever. David himself, for example,

* Gen. xii. 1-3.

† Gen. xxviii. 14.

‡ Numb. xiv. 21.

was inspired to sing of the Redeemer, in well-known words, saying :
*" Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree :—The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son ; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."** It is true that this was poetically represented in subsequent verses under figures of speech which rather indicated temporal than spiritual conquests. But to shew that such language was metaphorical, that it really taught the moral and spiritual regeneration of heathendom, listen to other outbursts of David's inspiration : *" Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord, come before His presence with singing. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving ; be thankful unto Him and bless His name."*† Again : *" The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitudes of isles be glad thereof."*‡ And once more : *" He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, as long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His name shall endure for ever. Men shall be blessed in Him ; all nations shall call Him blessed."*§

Was not this a reiteration of the Abrahamic covenant, telling of Redemption for the entire human family ? Did it not continue to teach Israel, just as Moses had before taught them, that a time was coming when all the earth should be filled with GOD's glory ?

But let us go on further. For as time advanced and Hebrew prophets multiplied, instead of this testimony becoming confused and self-contradictory, it was heard in more united harmony, Listen to one prophet, saying :—*" It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall*

* Psalm. ii. 6-8.

† Psalm. c. 1. 2. 4.

‡ Psalm. xvii. i.

§ Psalm. lxxii. 6. etc.

go and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

Again:—"It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be my Salvation unto the ends of the earth."†

Hear also another prophet:—"The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the shower upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."‡

And now another:—"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."§ And, another:—"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all the people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."||

And hear yet one more testimony from the pen of another,—the last prophet of Israel, who wrote four hundred years before Christ:—"From the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my Name and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord."¶

Many other such sayings might be quoted. But I pause here, asking you to observe the continuous and unbroken testimony of these Hebrew witnesses to their confident belief in this one great Hope,—the hope of a Redeemer, who should ultimately restore the whole world to GOD. This had been persistently put forth from the beginning by a variety of persons, and under a continuous course of changing circumstances, by patriarchs, kings, and

* Isa. ii. 3, 4.

† Isa. xlix. 6.

‡ Micah. v. 7.

§ Habak. ii. 14.

|| Dan. vii. 13, 14.

¶ Malachi. i. 11.

prophets; when the Church of GOD existed without any specially covenanted people, when it was confined to one elect family, and when it had become, through growth, a large and influential nation; again, when that nation was wandering in the wilderness of Sinai without a home to call its own, when it was established and consolidated as an empire; when it was being punished for its sins in the captivity of Babylon; and lastly when it had been restored again to its own territorial inheritance. Through all these trying changes the teaching never fluctuated, the hope never wavered. Yet what was there naturally in the position of the Hebrews to give birth to these confident expectations? Surrounded as they were by the mighty empires of Egypt, and Chaldea, of Assyria and Persia, of Greece and Rome, what human ground had they for imagining that the comparatively small kingdoms of Palestine could influence the entire world, enclosing it within the bosom of its own covenanted blessings, and redeeming it from sin to righteousness? Cut off, too, as they were, by the Mosaic laws from all affinity with these surrounding nations, what room was afforded them under any ordinary conditions of human nature for the origination or cultivation of such universal sympathies and such magnificent hopes? There was nothing approaching to such ideas in any other religion or country. In this respect, as in many others, the Hebrew race stood out alone in the earth,—representatives of thoughts and feelings too noble and sublime, too generous and God-like, to be considered as having been untaught of GOD. If this splendid exhibition of patient belief in their destiny as the moral regenerators and saviours of the world did not spring from divine enlightenment, you must, at least, allow that it presents us with a sort of moral miracle, which raises that race above all which have ever existed, and which entitles them to the astonishment and admiration of mankind.

But now let us proceed with the picture. Our sacred chronicles inform us that, after the teaching of the prophet Malachi, (which was four hundred years before the birth of Christ) no prophet arose, no fresh Revelation was given. What happened during that long interval? Everything which was calculated to

crush these hopes, and to destroy these grand ideas. The country was decimated by Antiochus Epiphanes, and afterwards subjugated by the Romans. It suffered almost everything which a nation could be called upon to endure; enough to dispirit the most sanguine, and to break down for ever the bravest hearts. Yet what was the result? These past Revelations of hope and mercy for the world were imperishable. They not only survived, but were fulfilled. First came John the Baptist with a message straight from God, saying:—“*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*”* Nor was the meaning of that message capable of any misinterpretation. For we read that his father immediately connected his birth with the roll of ancient prophecy saying:—“*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began; to perform the mercy promised to our father Abraham.*”† In which words you see how well the predestined mission of John the Baptist was understood; how clearly it was regarded as the accomplishment of GOD’s preceding Revelations to Israel. The same testimony was given on the birth of JESUS, when the long promised Redeemer was about to appear:—“*He shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God, shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.*”‡ Again,—“*Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to you and to all people.*”§ So, when the aged Simeon took the infant Jesus into his arms, he is described as blessing GOD and saying:—“*Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles; and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.*”|| And was this renewed testimony falsified when Christ began His ministry? In Him, as

* S. Matt. iii. 2. † S. Luke. i. 68. etc. ‡ S. Luke. i. 32. etc.

§ S. Luke. ii. 10.

|| S. Luke. ii. 29. etc.

the greatest prophet of Israel, all those former prophesyings became intensified and glorified. From the very first He appeared with sympathies towards man which were alike irrespective of creed or race. Whose creed was more hostile to the Jewish than that of the Samaritans, who separated from the worship of Israel and denied the authority of its prophets? Yet remember His gracious discourse to the woman of Samaria, in which we have that world-wide declaration of truth:—“*Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.*”* Again, what nation was more hateful to His own nationality than the Canaanitish? Yet remember His pitying compassion toward the Syrophœnician woman, when he said to her:—“*great is Thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*”† It is true that the primary mission of the Redeemer was to His own people, and that when He sent forth His disciples to preach His coming kingdom throughout Palestine, He said. “*Go not into the way of the Gentiles.*”‡ But that was only for the purpose of being faithful to His covenant, that salvation might first be offered to His own nation. It was not that He excluded others. On the contrary, He stood before His own nation as the Redeemer of the whole world. His was a great heart of love which looked beyond Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, saying: “*Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*”§ Pitying the groans and tears, and strivings of universal manhood, which thirsted for a peace it knew not where to find, and aspired after a knowledge it could not possibly discover, Jesus met it with words like these:—“*If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink.*”|| “*Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”¶—His invitations were limitless and exhaustless. And therefore, when He

* S. John. iv. 21. etc. † S. Matt. xv. 28. ‡ S. Matt. x. 5.
§ S. John. x. 16. || S. John. vii. 37. ¶ S. Matt. xi. 28.

finally sent forth His Apostles to proclaim His finished Redemption He cried.—“*Go ye into all the world, and preach to every creature.*”† Thus He was the Prophet of universal manhood, and the high Priest of all nations. He rose above all parties, and all races. He appealed but to one great centre of emotion, the human heart and conscience. Hence when he opened the Gospel Dispensation on the day of Pentecost, remember how Parthians, Medes, Mesopotamians, Phrygians, Pamphylians, Lydians, Cretes, and Arabians, were alike made partakers of one Spirit; and how “*every one*” who called on the name of the Lord was “*saved*.” Yes, Ramchandra; and, like Himself, the apostles were just as world loving. Preaching the Gospel of Christ’s Kingdom, “*to the Jew first,*” “*but also to the Gentile,*”* the saying soon went abroad. “*Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*”† This truth was summed up afterwards in the Prophetic vision of St. John: “*After this, I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the Lamb, and cried, Salvation to our Lord God which sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb.*”‡

Now was not all this in exact harmony with the hopes and aspirations of preceeding centuries? Was there anything similar to it in any other religion of the earth? Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, India, China, had put forth many lofty sentiments; but not one had a four thousand years roll of teachers, with a creed of this continuous yet united character, prophesying that it would ultimately introduce moral purification over the entire world, and gather all nations of the earth into one common Salvation. I say, then, is there not something in this fact which makes the religion of the Bible tower up high above all other forms of belief, and which carries with it an intuitive evidence of its own divinity? Does it not appear to be beyond conception that, when the religions of all other nations were content with mere localised systems of faith, excepting perhaps Buddhism as founded by Guadama, a little country like

* S. Matt. xvi. 15.

† Acta. xi. 18.

‡ Rev. vii. 9.

Palestine should have given birth to a long succession of the most divine speakers and writers centuries before Guadama was born, who proclaimed peace and righteousness to all mankind through a coming Redeemer ; and whose testimony was afterwards confirmed to the very letter, unless they had been taught it by actual Revelation ?

RAM. I have listened to your discourse with profound delight ; and I confess that your evidences are most convincing. Indeed I am almost persuaded. Still I should like to hear how you will reply to one difficulty which has been crossing my mind. You speak of this world-wide Redemption as having been the national Hope of Israel. But if so, if it had been so continuously and unitedly the one belief of that people, and that for so many centuries, how came it to pass that, when it was fulfilled, the great mass of the nation rejected it ? For if I read your New Testament rightly this proposal of the benefits of God's covenant of Mercy to the Gentiles, instead of being taken as a proof of the truth of Christ's Mission, was one of the very greatest grounds of their opposition to it.

BISHOP. You raise a criticism which sounds fair and plausible. Yet it admits of the easiest possible reply, the force of which I feel sure you will be candid enough to admit.

Those who found a stumbling block and rock of offence in this admission of "all nations" to the benefits of GOD's covenant, did so, not because the Gentiles were offered admission into it, but because that admission was offered upon terms of absolute equality with themselves. They did not deny or disbelieve in this national hope ; but misunderstood it, and interpreted it in a proud, selfish, and carnal spirit. They imagined that the Gentiles were to be placed within their covenant in a subordinate and inferior position ; not as freed men enjoying all their own privileges, but as servants and vassals to themselves. When the Gospel declared, therefore, that Jew and Gentile had both been made "*one in Christ*" upon precisely equal terms, and that there was to be "*no difference*," their pride and ignorance revolted from the idea. Once more then I say, this disbelieving rejection of Christianity did not arise from any want of faith in the Abrahamic promise,

but only in their mistaken apprehension of its full purport. It was with the Hebrew nation, as with every other. The greater portion of it were self-willed, and unspiritual, full of prejudices which fostered pride. Those who were elevated in high moral sentiment, and whose sympathies beat in unison with the noblest sentiments of humanity, were, comparatively speaking, few in number. Your criticism, therefore, does not touch the argument, which I have just been giving you. It is but an impeachment of the gross and carnal minded views which the mass of the Hebrew people took, at the time of Christ's appearing, as to the true meaning of their prophets' announcements.

RAM. I see your position. Nevertheless, you must honestly allow, that since the time of the Redeemer, Christianity has not very widely fulfilled its appointed mission to the heathen.

BISHOP. The progress has been slow. But are not many of the greatest evolutions of nature slow and gradual? If it be so in the physical universe, why should we expect it to be otherwise in the spiritual? Do not be unfair. The conversion of the Gentiles and fulfilment of the Abrahamic hope is, after all, steadily and widely advancing. Only compare the world now with what it was when Christianity commenced its career in Palestine. Is not the banner of Christ now floating over scores of lands which were at that period ruled by ignorance and barbarism? And is it not still achieving similar conquests throughout every portion of the globe? Doubtless it is often marred and misrepresented by the unworthiness of many of its own professed followers, just as the noble Monotheism of Israel was; for, without some miraculous intervention of divine power to coerce the outbreaks of human passion, every age, even under the noblest systems of religious faith and feeling, must necessarily exhibit marks of inbred frailty and sin. The question however is, whether, in spite of these obstructions to the general diffusion of enlightened morality and virtue, Christianity is not gradually blessing the nations of the earth, and slowly helping to regenerate the world. Take the Indian Empire in which we now are for example. You have had conquerors invading you from the days of Alexander the Great until now. But tell me, did Greek, or Tartar, ever rule you by

laws so just and liberal as those which Great Britain administers ? What were your liberties under Mahometanism ? What security had you for life and property, and domestic peace in former ages, compared with those which you now have under the enlightened and beneficent administration of our own Christian government ? There may be many things here and there in it which you would like to have otherwise ; we may often adopt courses which you consider mistaken or unwise ; but few, if any, candid critics can hold that we do not wish to act mercifully, and that our motives are not based upon good intentions and upon principles of truth equity and righteousness. Is not this, then, an instance in which the blessing of Abraham has come upon you ? Without Christianity we should have been ruthless, barbarous, and merciless.

RAM. That may be true of the English in India. But was it true of the Spanish conquerors in South America ?

BISHOP. You forget that, even among Christians, there may be bad as well as good representatives of their faith. The progress of Christianity, I allow, has been marked in history by wholesale pages of villainy, quite opposed to its own pure principles. The inveterate hardness of men's hearts has often made the human element preponderate over the divine. That only, however, shows how the antagonism of our corrupt nature makes the moral regeneration of the nations a work of slow and difficult growth. I have said this to you from the beginning. It is but part of that great conflict which is continually going on between the forces of good and evil ; and which, under the moral government of our God, will, through Christianity, gradually terminate in the ascendancy of universal righteousness. We see not the end as yet. Let us be patient. In the meantime mark how God's Revelations to the Hebrew people are being slowly accomplished in the world. The faith which was once only known in the little country of Palestine is now spread over all countries. There is scarcely a coast along the surface of the earth, scarcely an island in the ocean of either hemisphere, where the praises of Christ are not sung by devoted worshippers, and in which the tale of His redeeming love is not freely and widely published. What can you say to this ? If that old faith of the Hebrew nation had been only

forged out of human self-consciousness this world-wide fulfilment of it would be an unaccountable miracle. A conviction that it sprang from divine Revelation alone accounts for the facts.

RAM. I shall go from my interview with you far more inclined towards Christianity than I ever was before.

DIALOGUE XII.

RAMCHANDRA RESUMES HIS INQUIRY INTO THE EVIDENCES OF
CHRISTIANITY AS A DIVINE REVELATION.

RAMCHANDRA. I have reached that stage in my inquiries which compels me to acknowledge that I am well nigh satisfied. I have to choke my pride of heart while I say it; but I should do violence to my convictions if I were to suppress the statement. Our last conversation has been of great service to me. At the same time, I should feel greatly obliged if you would kindly strengthen my convictions by enlarging your argument upon the evidences of Christianity.

BISHOP. That carries with it many lines of consideration quite independently of the one along which we travelled at our last interview. As you were so interested in that line, however, let us keep to it. I refer to the singular unity and continuity of thought which exists between the early teaching of the Old Testament and the subsequent developments of the New Testament. It is a form of evidence which, to my own mind, is irresistibly convincing, considering the length of time which those dispensations covered, and the almost certain fact that, had they not been supernaturally inspired, they would have necessarily contained many inherent contradictions.

RAM. Yes. You have struck a note in that method of argument which greatly impresses me. If you can put forth any thing more, as clear as what was exhibited in your last argument, I shall find great difficulty in preventing myself from finally declaring myself a convert.

BISHOP. Imagine that you were to come across a number of curiously locked up caskets and chests, made of different shapes and sizes, and evidently of great antiquity; none of which had any

means of being opened by keys within your reach. Imagine moreover, that after all search for such keys had been in vain, you were suddenly to find in some other place, a long way off, one key which would immediately unlock all of them. Would you not reasonably conclude that those caskets and chests had been made on purpose to be opened by that key? Would not the evidence be conclusive that one originating mind had been at work in this contrivance?

RAM. It would be only irrational scepticism to come to any other conclusion.

BISHOP. Well. That is the sort of evidence upon which I shall stand to-day. I shall bring before you certain facts and ceremonies found in ancient Israel, which were intricate and complex in their character, and of themselves without any positive meaning; but which are explained and made clear by *one* simple key *viz.*, the *Doctrine of Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ*. And I shall argue from this circumstance, that all such appointments in the ancient Hebrew Church must have been originated under a foreseeing knowledge of their fitness to be unlocked by that key. In other words, that both were the work of one Master Mind, and were correlated by special design. Will that be a fair analogy?

RAM. I shall give you a better opinion, when I have heard your explanation of those circumstances.

BISHOP. Let me commence, then, with the JEWISH TABERNACLE; which was a building divided into two chambers. The first of these chambers was separated from the other by a curtain or veil, within which there stood only one piece of furniture called the "ARK OF THE COVENANT." It was an oblong chest containing the two Tables of the Law given on Mount Sinai, and upon the lid of which, called the "MERCY SEAT," rested a "CLOUD OF GLORY" as a symbol of the divine Presence. Now the Hebrew people saw nothing in these arrangements but a picture of GOD'S Presence in them, by which He waited to receive their worship. Under the doctrine of Redemption, however, we unlock their hidden and predictive meaning. For herein was set forth the *Person of our Redeemer*, whose Human Nature (which perfectly fulfilled the moral law of GOD given on Mount Sinai) was like this Ark which con-

tained the two perfect Tables of the Law, and whose Divine nature was like that Cloud of Glory on the Ark, separated from, yet indivisibly one with it. Moreover this Double Nature in His One Person was the medium of GOD's Covenant relationship to the world, exactly as the "Ark of the Covenant" was to the Jews.

RAM. Your lordship's remarks seem rather fanciful.

BISHOP. I was prepared to hear you say so, and of course they would be fanciful if this were all which I had to adduce. The force of the argument, however, will increase as we go forward. When you see the cumulative effect of New Testament light shining upon Jewish ceremonialism, you will better understand how wonderfully it unlocks its hidden meaning, and reveals the unity of the teaching which ran through so many centuries.

RAM. I shall listen with the greatest attention.

BISHOP. In the other chamber of the Tabernacle, were placed three pieces of furniture; (1) the "GOLDEN CANDLESTICK," which was always kept burning night and day; (2) the "TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD," on which were placed twelve loaves replenished week by week; (3) the "ALTAR OF SWEET INCENSE," immediately in front of the Veil. It was before the unseen Mercy Seat, therefore, that offerings of Incense were made to GOD every morning and evening by the high priest. Now the Jews saw nothing more in all this than a symbol of the Church of GOD upon earth, which was *lighted* by the lamps of divine truth, *fed* by the Providence of divine bounty, and *accepted in its daily adoration* by the offices of its priestly mediators. Under the New Testament covenant, however, we find it pictorial of the coming Redeemer. For the doctrine of the New Testament is, that the Church of GOD upon earth has no spiritual light, sustenance, or mediation, except that which comes from Christ as the High Priest. Thus He said of Himself:—"I am the light of the world."* "I am the bread of life."† "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."‡ Do you not perceive in this a second key which unlocks Jewish ceremonialism; revealing it as having a pre-ordained meaning which was fulfilled only after a course of fifteen centuries?

* S. John. viii. 12. † S. John. vi. 48. ‡ S. John. xiv. 6.

RAM. It still appears to me that you are drawing upon your imagination for your arguments.

BISHOP. Perhaps so, if that were all we could produce. Think however of my illustration of the caskets and chests. If the key which I suppose you to have discovered only fitted into two out of the number, and had no kind of equal adaptation to the rest ; you might then reasonably enough say : "The coincidence of its fitting into these two is certainly very curious ; but I still cannot believe it has any real connection with them, I cannot believe that these caskets were all made for the key, inasmuch as many of them are incapable of being opened by it." Up to the present moment, therefore, I give you full leave to doubt. But what if I take the caskets one by one, and open them all with this golden key ? Will you not then allow, that, with each repeated success, the triumph of the discovery, will appear more and more probable ?

RAM. A process of reasoning by induction like that would certainly be fair. I neither wish to be uncandid, nor obstinate.

BISHOP. Let us proceed, then, to another portion of the Hebrew ceremonial, and consider what was done in the Tabernacle on the "DAY OF ATONEMENT." This ritual was observed only once in the year, and was intended to be an atonement for the sins of the whole nation. On that day the principal function consisted in an entrance of the High Priest within the Veil of the Tabernacle, where, as sole mediator between GOD and the offending nation He stood before the Mercy Seat and presented the blood of the sin offering accompanied with the sweet Incense. None else had any share in that offering or intercession. The High Priest officiated alone ; nor was any one else even allowed within the Tabernacle. Now what did all this mean ? What was the signification of this isolation of the High Priest during the ceremonial ? Why, as being for the sins of the entire nation, was it only observed once in the year ? Why were the incense and atoning blood taken within the Veil ? These questions found no direct interpretation under the Mosaic Law, further than as being appointments of divine order for the purpose of more special solemnity. The Jews had no key to unlocked their meaning and

invest them with any minute doctrinal significance. When we read them, however, in the light of our Christian doctrine of Redemption, the key is at once discovered. We then perceive that, unknown to Israel, all this was figurative, and prophetic of the coming Advent of Christ, as the one Mediator, and sole High Priest of the Church. What the offering of the atonement was, when thus presented before the Mercy Seat once in the year, as full and sufficient for the sins of the entire nation, Christ's offering of Himself was, once in the end of the world, as a sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of all mankind. What the taking of incense and blood within the Veil of the inner sanctuary was, in order that it might there be presented before the symbols of the Divine Presence, Christ's Entrance into Heaven after death, resurrection, and ascension was, in order that He might appear in the Presence of GOD, making intercession on our behalf, and presenting the incense of the Church's adoration. And what this limitation of functions to the High Priest alone was, such was Christ's Office as Sole High Priest and Saviour, with whose propitiation and intercession no priest on earth has any share whatsoever. Thus our apostle S. Paul writes:—"*Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the High priest entereth into the Holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must He often have suffered, since the foundation of the world. But now ONCE in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*"*

I ask you to look at all this, Ramchandra, and observe how harmoniously the type and antitype fit into each other. Moreover, I beg you to think, whether, considering that fourteen centuries intervened between them, it must not have been one Omniscient Mind which prepared both.

RAM. The argument is certainly very remarkable.

BISHOP. Let us go on, then, to another point, and enter into

* Heb. ix. 24. etc.

the ceremonial appointed for, what was called, the "FEAST OF THE PASSOVER." I have no doubt you remember the bondage of Israel in Egypt, and the cruel manner in which Pharaoh refused to let the people go away from the land, when Moses, under the guidance of GOD, demanded their release. You doubtless also remember those ten great judgements, called the ten plagues, which fell upon Pharaoh's kingdom; against every one of which, save the last, he hardened his heart and increased his obstinacy. That last plague involved the death of the first-born in every Egyptian house. The destroying angel, however, spared every Israelite household through the appointed "*Feast of the Passover.*" It was on this wise. Each house was to take a "*lamb without blemish,*" the blood of which, when slain, was to be "*sprinkled,*" on the "*door post,*" the promise of the covenant being:—"When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you."* It was ordained moreover that, not a "*bone*" of this Paschal lamb should be "*broken;*"† while it was to be eaten with "*bitter herbs;*" and with "*unleavened bread.*"‡ Now once more, what did all this signify? Jewish theology offers no distinctive interpretation of it. Nor is it till we reach the period when Christ appeared as our Redeemer, that we can penetrate into its hidden meaning. Then, however, all becomes plain. With this golden key the casket, so to speak, is unlocked. Do you ask how? I answer *Christ* was here represented under the figure of the *Paschal Lamb* as an offering unto GOD. And, remember, He died on the feast of the Passover. Is it said that the lamb was, "*without blemish*"? So was He the "*Lamb of God without spot or blemish,*" innocent, pure, and sinless. Is it said that "*not a bone of it was to be broken.*"? So, when Christ was crucified, we read that the ordinary practice in crucifixion of breaking the sufferer's bones was omitted.§ Is it said that when the blood of the lamb "*was sprinkled on the door posts*" of every Israelite's house, the destroying angel "*passed them over,*" and they escaped the general judgement? So, when by faith in

* Exodus. xii. 13.

† Ex. xii. 46.

‡ Ex. xii. 8.

§ S. John. xix. 32, 33.

Christ His atonement is received into our hearts, we are redeemed from all judgement, and escape the curse of condemnation. Is it said, that the lamb was to be "*eaten*"? So are we to eat by faith the body of Christ, and feed on Him in our hearts. He declared of Himself "*He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.*"* Is it said, that the lamb was to be eaten with "*bitter herbs*," and with "*unleavened bread*"? So are we taught to receive the atonement of Christ with bitter sorrow for our sins; as it is written: "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*"† Lastly, is it said that through this old ritual of the Jews, they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and went forth freely to their promised land? So, through Christ's Redemption, all who receive it in faith, go forth from the bondage of sin and Satan to the promised land of Heaven.

May I not say, then, that in this way we once more trace out both a unity and continuity of Scripture teaching which gives us a reasonable confirmation of our belief as having been a truly divine Revelation? Does it seem probable to you that all these various forms of Hebrew ceremonial could have been so invented by Moses as thus to fit exactly into what came about fourteen hundred years afterwards? Would any mere human contrivances have mutually adapted themselves one after another into these moulds of preconceived thought and subsequent fulfilment? Is it not a species of evidence in favour of a divine Revelation which is based on exactly the same line of argument as that which struck you so forcibly in our last conversation?

RAM. I begin to realise your meaning with much greater force than I did when you commenced. Are there any other things of a like nature of which you can speak?

BISHOP. There are so many that I should weary you by the recital of them.

RAM. Pray continue.

BISHOP. I now call your attention to the ceremonial of the

* S. John. vi. 58.

† 1. Cor. v. 7, 8.

ordinary "SIN OFFERING;" one principle feature of which was, that it had to be "*burnt without the camp*" as a sign of the extreme penalty of sin. Now is it not remarkable that, when the Romans crucified CHRIST, Calvary the place of penalty should have been "*without the camp*," i.e., outside Jerusalem? St. Paul marks this in one place saying: "*Wherefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.*"* Observe, this was not done with the preconceived idea of fulfilling any type or prophecy; but simply in conformity with a custom of the country. Yet it fitted into this old Jewish ritual as a key within the rightful lock; and so accomplished its true signification. Again, consider the "YEAR OF JUBILEE," when once in fifty years, upon the sounding of a trumpet, every Hebrew who had forfeited his inheritance by debt received it back again. This was designed to prefigure the Gospel dispensation, when CHRIST should blow the trumpet in Zion, by preaching the forgiveness of sins, and the release of every spiritual captive, and when the inheritance lost to man by the fall was restored to him. The Jews, even themselves, most probably understood this. At all events CHRIST fulfilled it, according to His own saying: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" "*This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"† Again consider "THE CITIES OF REFUGE," i.e., certain towns appointed in Israel, whose gates were to be opened night and day, as a refuge for those who had unwittingly shed blood, in order that they might be safe from the hands of the Avenger. Here we have CHRIST still further portrayed. For is He not our Refuge? Is not salvation for the guilty to be found in Him as through an open door, both by night and by day? And are we not alone safe in His keeping from the avenging hand of GOD'S Law? Again, consider "THE WAVE OFFERING," during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was one of the Mosaic statues that the first sheaf cut

* Heb. xiii. 12.

† S. Luke. iv. 18. etc.

in barley harvest should be lifted up by the priest and waved as the first-fruits of the field. Now for what was this done? To the Jews it formed but part of a ceremonial which only indicated a solemn act of homage to the Creator. To ourselves it presents a deeper meaning, and one which, in connection with all that has gone before, cannot but have been providentially pre-ordained. For this ceremonial took place on exactly the same day as when Christ arose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, was prefigured by that sheaf, in that He was then lifted up above the earth as the "*first-fruits*"* of the coming harvest. Accordingly S. Paul said: "*Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*" Once more, consider the "CONSECRATION-AND THE VESTMENTS OF THE HIGH PRIEST OF ISRAEL." On consecration, he was first washed, and then anointed with oil. In vestments, he was chiefly distinguished by a mitre or crown, on the front of which was a golden plate containing an inscription, "*Holiness to the Lord.*" While on the garment which lay over his chest and shoulders were two ornaments of peculiar significance. In the first place, this contained, what the Jews called a "*Breast-plate of Judgement,*" holding precious stones in separate settings, and upon each of which the name of one Tribe of Israel was engraved. In the next place, it contained two similar settings on the shoulder pieces; six of the Tribes' names being engraved on the stones within one setting, and six in the other. Thus the names of the Tribes rested over his breast individually, and over his shoulders collectively. Such was the appointed attire in which the high priest had to appear within the Sanctuary before GOD, when he mediated between Him and the people by asking for His guidance and protection. Now transfer this ceremonialism to the Person of Christ, our great High Priest, as drawn for us in the New Testament. Was He not consecrated by the washing of water in Jordan, and then anointed by the descent of the Holy Spirit? Is He not in office called "*The Holy One of Israel?*" Was not His entire life "*Holiness to the Lord?*" And does He not

* 1. Cor. xv. 20.

now stand before GOD as our Mediator, in order to give His Church guidance and protection, having all the names of His people individually upon His heart, while collectively He bears them, so to speak, upon His shoulders which are the symbols of strength? Was it not written, "*The Government shall be upon His shoulder!*"* Is not all this the exact counterpart of redeeming love to the prefiguration of it by Levitical ritual? Put all these things together, and ask yourself whether what S. Paul said must not have been true, that the "*Law was a shadow of good things to come*"†

RAM. The question I have to decide is, whether it was thus originally designed, or whether S. Paul, like a skilful dialectician, did not cleverly adapt these old forms of Jewish ritual to his own purposes?

BISHOP. Be it so. But decide upon that question candidly. Let me grant for the sake of argument that S. Paul may have been an enthusiast; but he was assuredly no hypocrite. He felt and meant what he said. Moreover he was a "*Hebrew of the Hebrews*," and was certainly much more likely to have had a keener insight into the deep and hidden meaning of his own ritual than ourselves. But put that thought out of view; and consider the whole of the case in connection with the past and present. S. Paul held that the Jewish ritual had been fulfilled in Christianity, and was doomed to pass away as having served its appointed purposes. The Jews of his day maintained that it was not so. They contended that the Levitical Law, so far from being intended as a temporary Institution, was meant to be permanent, and would not perish. Which was right? Let the facts of history decide for you. Where are now this Jewish ritual, and all its ceremonial observances? The temple and its priesthood are passed away. Eighteen centuries, therefore, bear witness to the fact that S. Paul's judgement was better than that of his unbelieving brethren. And if so, what is the conclusion? Must it not be that the Levitical Law of Moses has now become merged, like a dissolving view, in the higher light and glory

* Isaiah. ix. 6.

† Heb. x. 1.

of the New Testament dispensation, and that it has passed away like a shadow, *because* the substance which it symbolised and foreshadowed has veritably taken its place? What, then, remains but to allow that the Mosaic Law was formed under divine foreknowledge; and that the teaching of the Old Testament was given by divine inspiration? Tell me honestly, Ramchandra, can you any longer resist this evidence?

RAM. Its force drives me into silence. I can scarcely ask for more.

BISHOP. Yet there is much more, if you wish for it. Up to this point I have chiefly represented Old Testament foreshadowings of our Redeemer in His Atoning and Mediatorial offices. The New Testament sets Him forth, however, not only as a great High Priest, but as a Prophet, and a King. Now in these offices also He was strikingly prefigured. In the first place, think of Moses, who said:—“*A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up from among your brethren, like unto me.*”^{*} A prophecy which was invariably applied to the coming Messiah by all Jews, even in the time of Christ Himself. Now how was it fulfilled? Observe the striking parallelisms. (1) Moses gave Israel the Law, as a covenant of works, from Mount Sinai. Christ gave the Gospel, as a covenant of grace, from Mount Calvary. (2) Moses remained unknown in the midst of His people, until he entered upon his public office. Christ remained equally unknown among His brethren, until He commenced His ministry. (3) Moses, when born, was in danger of His life by the persecution of the king of Egypt who had decreed the death of Israel’s male infants. Christ, when born, was no less in danger of His life by the persecution of King Herod, who had decreed the death of all Jewish infants under two years of age. (4) Moses was hidden from danger in Egypt. Christ was rescued from danger as a babe by being taken into Egypt. (5) Moses, when he first appeared before his brethren as their deliverer, was rejected and insulted by them. Christ, when He first appeared, was “*despised and rejected*” by men. (6) Moses, when he commenced his

^{*} Dent. xviii. 15.

work as a prophet, confronted the powers of Pharaoh and testified of his mission without any fear of man. Christ, when He commenced His Ministry, likewise confronted the powers of the world around Him quite as fearlessly and undauntedly. (7) Moses, in confirmation of his mission, wrought miracles of judgement, the first of which consisted in turning water into blood. Christ, in confirmation of His ministry, wrought miracles of mercy, the first of which consisted in turning water into wine. (8) Moses, while teaching His people in the wilderness was wearied by their ignorance and back-sliding. Christ, while teaching the people, had as often to rebuke His disciples for their ignorance, and to lament the back-sliding of many of His followers. (9) Moses, when on Mount Sinai, had his face supernaturally lightened. Christ, when on the Mount of Transfiguration, received a similar effulgence of the divine glory. (10) Moses, when in communion with GOD, spake with Him, "*face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend.*"* Christ held intercourse with His Father by direct communion with His Presence. (11) Moses fed the people with manna, and gave them "bread in the wilderness." Christ fed His people with Heavenly Manna, and gave bread to thousands in the wilderness. (12) Moses, when the people thirsted, gave them waters in the desert. Christ opened rivers of water to the thirsty souls of men, and said: "*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.*"† (13) Moses, when the people were dying in the wilderness, lifted up a Brazen Serpent on a pole, that all who looked thereon might live. Christ, when sinners were dying in the wilderness of this world through the serpent-bites of sin, elevated Himself in the doctrine of Redemption as the only salvation of sinners. Was not Christ, then, when viewed as a Prophet, "*like unto Moses*"? How can you account for these marvellous counterparts, unless you see in them the hand of Omniscient Deity? The sceptics may reply that this was the result of accidental circumstances, that all the parallelism comes from ingenious adaptation rather than from pre-arranged intention. That is very easily said. But try it by

* Exodus. xxxiii. 11.

† S. John. vii. 37.

the analogies of common sense. Take the illustration of a complicated lock containing thirteen separate wards, which must all be opened with one key. Would it be common sense, on finding such a key, to say that it was not manufactured with a pre-arranged intention to open that special lock? Or put it in the following way. One man, who is peculiarly distinguished in his voice and face and dress, sends a traveller on his road to a distant country, saying, you will some day meet another who is "*like unto me.*" When you do so, follow him, and he will give you great treasures. The traveller starts forth, and throughout a journey of many thousand miles finds no one answering to the description. At length he meets a person who in thirteen distinct particulars corresponds to his expectations. Under such circumstances, would not his reason and common sense induce him to exclaim: "This is the man for whom I have been so long waiting"? Well! such is exactly the parallel between the prophet Moses and the great Prophet for whom the Jews had been looking throughout fourteen centuries. Hence the more watchful and farsighted of them said:—"This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."* And in so saying, they were right.

RAM. I see the continuity and unity of the Old and New Testament teaching more and more clearly.

BISHOP. I will not fatigue you, therefore, with more than one other example. Look only, in the next and last place, at the wondrous foreshadowing of Christ's Kingly character through the person of David, king of Israel. (1) David was called to the throne of Israel by divine appointment. So was Christ. (2) David was chosen king in Bethlehem. So was Christ. (3) David was a shepherd over his father's sheep. So was Christ. He is expressly called: "*The Shepherd of the sheep.*"† (4) David fought single-handed against the giant foe of his people and overcame him. So did Christ. (5) David, although an anointed king, had to suffer persecution and endure malice, and often knew not where to lay his head. So it was with Christ. David

* S. John. vi. 14.

† Heb. xiii. 20.

was called, "*the man after God's own heart.*" So was Christ. (6) David was raised victoriously to the throne only after many conflicts and sorrows. So was Christ. (7) David was promised that his kingdom should be, "*an everlasting kingdom.*" So was Christ, in whose present kingdom David's promise was alone fulfilled. (8) David, through his many conflicts and victories, established peace in Israel. So did Christ. (9) David wept as he went up to Jerusalem by Mount Olivet. So did Christ. (10) David, during his life, made all necessary preparations for building God's Temple. So Christ, during His life, prepared everything needful for the future building up of His own Church, which is "*God's House*" or "*Temple.*" (11) David was both king and prophet; for, as the Royal Psalmist of Israel, he taught the people by Inspiration. So did Christ, who is our King and Prophet. (13) David, under this inspiration, prophesied that his kingdom should have "*the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.*"* Such is Christ's present kingdom. (14) David declared that "*his soul*" should "*not be left in the grave.*"† This was alone fulfilled in Christ, of whom David really spake, and who "*saw no corruption.*" (15) David said, "*all they that see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out their lips, they shake the head, saying: He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him.*"‡ These were the very acts and words of those who crucified Christ. (16) David said also: "*They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*"§ This was also done by the Roman soldiers who crucified Christ. (17) David wrote in another place: "*They gave also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*"|| This was also literally the case with Christ at His crucifixion. I might continue my parallelism; but these are sufficient. Surely something more than a human hand must have been at work in all this. A thousand years intervened between the historical and the ideal David. Yet the first foreshadowed the last, and the last re-exhibited the first (David's *sins* alone being excepted)

* Psalm. ii. 8. † Psalm. xvi. 10. ‡ Psalm. xxii. 7, 8.

§ Psalm. xxii. 18.

|| Psalm. lxxix. 21.

in a manner so minutely on the one hand, and so magnificently on the other, that to doubt their mutual coherence, and to deny the preordination of their moral continuity involves an act of self-contradicting incredulity.

RAM. Why self-contradicting?

BISHOP. Because the denial is an open reversal of the facts of history.

RAM. I do not apprehend your meaning.

BISHOP. Is it not, in the first place, indisputable, whether divinely revealed or not, that David received a promise of his kingdom being both "*everlasting*,"* and co-extensive with the "*uttermost parts of the earth*."†

RAM. That is plain from the Hebrew writings.

BISHOP. Is it not, in the next place, equally indisputable, that when Christ came, of the "*House of David*," whether divinely revealed or not, that He received the promise of inheriting this kingdom of David? It was said:—*The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.*‡ I do not at present ask whether either of these were true revelations from heaven. Let facts reply. At any rate, with an interval of one thousand years between them, there was a marked unity and continuity of purpose between them.

RAM. No one can disallow that.

BISHOP. Is it not, in the third place, quite as indisputable that Christ, during His ministry on earth, predicted the utter fall of David's temporal empire by the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews?

RAM. That is plain also from the New Testament.

BISHOP. Is it not, in the fourth place, an indisputable fact, explain it how you will, that the utter extinction of David's temporal empire did take place, and that it remains in ruins to this very day?

RAM. Unquestionably.

BISHOP. Is it not, then, in the fifth place, no less indisputable

* 2 Sam. vii. 13. 16. Psalm. lxxxix. 3. 4. 29. 36.

† Psalm. ii. 8. lxxii. 8. etc.

‡ S. Luke i. 32.

that, under such circumstances, David's temporal empire has been robbed of its everlasting and wide promised inheritance.

RAM. That seems in favour of the sceptic.

BISHOP. Yes, for the moment. But it is only a short-lived triumph. For, it is not quite as indisputable a fact, in the sixth place, that David's ancient empire, in relation to all its spiritual and world-wide purposes, is now perpetuated and consummated in Christ's Kingdom which has survived in its stead for nearly two thousand years, and, according to prophecy, is actually spread to "*the uttermost parts of the earth.*"? If Christianity had collapsed with Judaism, our belief in divine revelation would be, of course, untenable. But through its survival, as the true kingdom of David, according to pre-announced determination, the sceptic must see that, in proportion as he disbelieves, he is called back to faith through the very facts of history. For if he disbelieves because David's temporal kingdom has perished, he still has to meet the difficulty of this survival of David's kingdom in Christ. That is why I call the unbelief of the sceptic self-contradictory. He may affirm that these spiritual hopes of David's coming kingdom were illusory and chimerical; but he cannot deny the irresistible logic of facts which have preserved their unity and continuity. I argue, therefore, that, in rejecting evidences for a divine Revelation as seen in this fulfilment of type and prophecy, and in this continuity of facts and purpose, and that, through a term of three thousand years, the sceptic exhibits far more credulity as to the improbable than we do as to the probable.

RAM. Your reasonings more and more penetrate my convictions. How can I thank you sufficiently for the trouble which you have taken with my inquiries?

BISHOP. I have not touched as yet upon the general evidences drawn from Messianic prophecy. Nor does it seem needful in your present state of mind. I should like, however, to close this interesting conversation by adducing one remarkable case from the prophet Daniel. It is where he predicts this utter desolation of the Jewish kingdom, and the death of the Messiah; and describes those coming facts even by a chronological date. You must remember that Daniel was at this time in Babylon, when the

Jews were being partially restored from exile, and were waiting for the full restoration of their body politic in Jerusalem. You must also remember that, according to the accepted method of prophetic writing among the Jews, a "day" was understood for a "year," so that a week represented a week of years; and thus "seventy weeks" would mean four hundred and ninety years. Having made these introductory remarks, let me now read you the passage.

*"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy Holy City, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."**

I stop here in order to point out how the circumstances, predicted at the close of these "seventy weeks," denote the advent of that long promised time, when true and finished Atonement for sin and reconciliation to God in everlasting righteousness should be accomplished by the closing up of the Old Testament prophecy, and the anointing of the Lord Christ. That was the special subject treated of. So that if the commencement of these "seventy weeks" of years be known, they ought to terminate, by this announcement, at the time of the Crucifixion. Let us now go on.

"Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks, the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."†

I pause once more to notice here, how the commencement of the seventy weeks is given. It was to be dated from the decree which once more re-established the Jewish polity in Jerusalem. Like many other national revivals, this was not effected at once. Several Persian edicts were issued on the subject. But that which was the main cause of the revival of Jewish nationality was an edict issued under the authority of Artaxerxes Longimanus, when

* Daniel. ix. 24.

† Daniel. ix. 25.

Ezra, by that king's commission, instituted magistrates all over the land to govern the people according to their own laws, and otherwise commenced the full restoration of Jerusalem. Observe, the prediction states that from the "going forth" of this edict to the completed building of the city, there should be "*seven weeks*," i.e., seven weeks of years, or forty-nine years. Now it is a remarkable fact that the completed rebuilding and fortifying of the city, (B.C. 409,) after a period of very "troublous times" was exactly forty-nine years after this edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus. (B.C. 458.) But the next point is far more wonderful. For whereas "*threescore and two weeks*," i.e., four hundred, and thirty-four years, were further predicted as the interval which was to elapse between this completion of restored Jerusalem and the coming of Messiah, it is an historical fact that that period almost precisely expired at the beginning of S. John the Baptist's ministry, which ushered in the Messiah's Kingdom. For the "*threescore and two weeks*" dates from B.C. 409, and John the Baptist's ministry commenced about A.D. 25 or 26, making 434 years precisely. Let us now read on again.

*"And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself. And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."**

You will observe that in this verse, there is no further precise specification of time. It is only said: "And after" the "threescore and two weeks" certain further events were to happen. What were they to be? First, the death of Christ, though not "*for Himself*;" and secondly, the destruction and desolation of the rebuilt Jerusalem. Now these great events really did happen afterwards. As to more exact chronology, let us look to the next verse. "*And He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week He shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease; and upon the wings of abominations shall come a desolater even until the decreed consummation shall pour itself upon the desolate.*"†

* Daniel. ix. 26.

† Daniel. ix.

You will observe that the Messiah is here predicted as "confirming a covenant" with many for "*one week*," i.e., for seven years; which He did through the three and a half years' ministry of S. John the Baptist, and the three and a half years of His own ministry. For it is expressly said:—*The Law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God is preached.** You will also observe that the abolition of sacrifices among the Jews is predicted as taking place "*in the midst*" of this Messianic week. It should be rather translated "in the half part thereof," meaning in the *latter half part* of this week of years i.e., in the period of Christ's personal ministry. And was it not so? Add together these three predicted periods, the seven, sixty-two, and one week of years. They make four hundred and ninety years, beginning with Ezra's return to Palestine to restore the Jewish polity in Jerusalem, and ending A.D. 33, the very year of the crucifixion of Christ; when, by His once and for ever finished Redemption, all Jewish sacrifices became abrogated, and the New Covenant of Gospel salvation for the whole world was brought into life and power; and subsequently to which, as well as on account of it, the final desolation of the Jews was wrought by the Roman armies under Titus, who are here called, "*the people of the prince.*" Can anything be more exact, or more wonderful?

RAM. So wonderful, that I cannot help thinking the whole passage must have been inserted in the Bible after the events were accomplished.

BISHOP. That is impossible. For they appear in the Greek text of the Septuagint, which was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures made two hundred years before Christ. As a matter of prophecy, therefore, it is almost as easy to believe the words to have been written by Daniel as by any one else.

RAM. You certainly astonish me.

BISHOP. Put away astonishment, and exercise your reason. Deal with the facts of the case. Here is a prophecy running on throughout 490 years; broken up into three parts, containing predictions of events which could have been by no means naturally

* S. Luke. xvi. 16.

anticipated by a Jew, and which were utterly opposed to all the hopes and aspirations of the great mass of the nation, yet all fulfilled with perfect accuracy. I say, exercise your reason. Starting with all this as a matter of fact, how do you account for it? There can only be two theories. The one is that which we Christians hold, viz., that it was written by inspiration, as a direct revelation from GOD; the other, that it was a series of lucky guesses invented at haphazard, and fulfilled by mere accident. If you choose the latter theory you may well be astonished, for it is truly incredible. Surely, here is another instance in which Faith and Reason may be called twin-sisters. A revelation not being antecedently impossible or improbable, Reason consents to the belief. Each is confirmed by the other. The key is first wrought and placed in our hands. The lock is then produced; and, when tried by the key, opens. Is it not a proof, even to demonstration, shewing like the other evidences which I have adduced that the Bible is a true Revelation from GOD?

RAM. I can no longer hold out against you. I lay down my sword, and submit.

DIALOGUE XIII.

RAMCHANDRA CONFESSES HIS BELIEF IN CHRISTIANITY BUT INQUIRES INTO THE NECESSITY OF MAKING A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF IT.

RAMCHANDRA. Contrasting my feelings to-day, with those which I had, when I first sought an interview with your lordship, it seems as if during the whole interval, I had been listening to the trial of a prisoner whose guilt I had once believed in, but whose innocence has been now established in an open Court of justice.

BISHOP. In other words, you withdraw your accusations against Christianity?

RAM. Unless I greatly change, I shall henceforth be a secret believer.

BISHOP. Why a secret believer? What should make you belie your inward convictions?

RAM. It would be folly to profess them openly, lest I should have reason to change them afterwards.

BISHOP. Then you are not wholly persuaded.

RAM. For the present I am. But how do I know that further reflection may not alter my convictions?

BISHOP. That may be a legitimate argument for prolonged thought and consideration. Nevertheless, it cannot release you from the obligation of coming to a final decision. The acquisition of truth is far too important and precious to be made the subject of any dilatory hesitation, still less of idle indifferenciam.

RAM. Whatever may be the result, truth lies only between God and my own conscience. I do not see what others have to do with it.

BISHOP. On the contrary, truth really cherished in the consci-

ence, is like the rising of the morning sun ; it must burst forth to shed its light upon others.

RAM. Why so ?

BISHOP. Because there is a fundamental inconsistency between the discovery of truth, which is meant for the use and for the good of mankind, and the selfish suppression of it within one's own individual consciousness. If it be once deposited in your heart, it is a sacred trust which you have no moral right to keep to yourself, but are bound to make known to your brethren.

RAM. Why should I be made responsible for the faith of my brethren ? Let them discover it for themselves as I have done.

BISHOP. I have already told you the reason. Because it is a trust which you are morally bound to announce for the promotion of their happiness and enlightenment. When Dr. Jenner discovered the principle of vaccination, by which the horror of smallpox could be diminished, do you not think he was morally bound to communicate it to his brethren for their physical good ? How much more must this be the case, when a man has discovered truths which give the conscience peace, and which communicate the knowledge of everlasting life and salvation ?

RAM. It is not every one who is fitted to do this.

BISHOP. You are trifling, Ramchandra. I feel sure there are other causes lying in the background which make you waver in this manner. Are you sure that moral cowardice does not lie at the bottom of it ? You seem to me to be afraid of making a public profession of your new convictions, lest your former friends should despise you.

RAM. It certainly is not pleasant to be laughed at, or despised.

BISHOP. If you believe in Christ, even though it be only with faith like a grain of mustard seed, listen to one of His sayings :—
*" Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of the Father."**

RAM. Is there nothing between personal confession of Christ and being ashamed of Him ?

* S. Mark. viii. 38.

BISHOP. Yes. One thing lies between these.

RAM. What is it?

BISHOP. Insincerity!

RAM. Why do you say that?

BISHOP. Because the man who really believes in Christ, and who is ashamed to say so, acts a living lie. He is just like one who knows the secret of an accused friend's innocence; but who keeps it within his own breast, and is afraid to tell it, lest it should bring himself into trouble. He is therefore guilty both of insincerity and selfishness.

RAM. The question never addressed itself in that manner to my conscience.

BISHOP. Conscience itself often requires educating as much as the mind.

RAM. But has not an enlightened conscience some degree of liberty? Is one man's enlightenment to be a necessary standard for the direction of every one else?

BISHOP. Between man and man there must ever be liberty of conscience. But when conscience is enlightened by what it feels and knows to be the revealed will of GOD, it speaks with a voice of authority from which there is no appeal without insincerity of heart. And this is the case under your own circumstances. If you believe in Christ, your conscience is bound to follow Him. Listen, then, to what He says to His disciples:—"Go and tell how great things the Lord hath done for you."* "What you have heard in the ear, that proclaim on the house-tops."† "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."‡

RAM. What, then, would you have me to do?

BISHOP. In the first place:—"Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins."§

RAM. I am not prepared to do that.

BISHOP. Why not?

RAM. Because I should loose my caste, and be banished from my family.

* S. Mark. v. 19.

† S. Matt. x. 27.

‡ S. Matt. xii. 34.

§ Acts. xxii. 16.

BISHOP. I thought so, and I know it is a bitter alternative. But it must be done, Ramchandra, if you wish to be true to Christ, and honest in the sight of GOD.

RAM. Then Christianity comes upon us with an iron yoke.

BISHOP. Think of the life which your Redeemer voluntarily gave up, and of the burden which He so lovingly bore for you, and then ask whether the self sacrifice He asks of you is unreasonable. It will repay you with ten thousand blessings. Jesus says: "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"*

RAM. How could He call the yoke easy or the burden light, when it demands the sacrifice of family and friends, and of all social reputation?

BISHOP. Because union with Himself involving pardon, and peace, and everlasting life, will more than recompense you, both in this world, and the world to come.

RAM. It is very easy for you to say so, who were born within the Christian covenant, and who had no such sacrifice to make in becoming a Christian. The case is very different with me.

BISHOP. Do not think that I under-estimate your difficulty. But neither must you under-estimate my own self sacrifice in coming out to teach you. I forsook country and children, and gave up lands and friends for Christ; all of which cost me many bitter tears. I was led however by my dear Lord's saying:—"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."† And you must do the same. The preciousness of Christ is above all reckoning. He must either be everything or nothing to us. Yet when once embraced, the dearest objects on earth sink into comparative insignificance.

RAM. Your sentiments are noble, but, for my own part, I frankly acknowledge my faith does not give me courage to follow them. Were I to do as you desire, and consent to baptism, it would break my aged mother's heart.

BISHOP. Why not strive to lead her to a knowledge of the truth?

* S. Matt. xi. 29, 30.

† S. Matt. x. 37.

RAM. She clings to her native idolatry with a tenacity from which it would be impossible to detach her. You would not surely have me bring down her spirit to the grave with misery and desolation.

BISHOP. I cannot argue that point. The struggle between filial affection and duty to Christ is too great for a third party to interfere in. But, tell me, will you be ready, when she yields up her life at the call of nature, to forsake all other earthly ties and surrender yourself to your Redeemer by the open profession of Him in Baptism?

RAM. That would be far easier, and by God's help, I may per-adventure do so.

BISHOP. God grant it. Remember how it is written: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*"*

RAM. At all events, I thank you for your kindness and patience. I can give your lordship no recompence but gratitude; unless I add that my poor prayers shall always be raised to heaven for a blessing on you in time and eternity.

* S Matt. xvi. 24.

